

# Germany in travail

Otto Manthey-Zorn



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**GERMANY IN TRAVAIL**





# GERMANY IN TRAVAIL

BY

OTTO MANTHEY-ZORN

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## FOREWORD

**I**N THE summer of 1920 Amherst College granted me a leave of absence until January, 1921, to go to Germany and attempt to analyse the state of mind in which the Germans were facing the conditions and problems resulting from defeat and the revolution.

As chance would have it, the summer and fall of 1920 were unusually opportune for such a study. The logic of events culminating in the conference at Spa had finally made the Germans begin to realize the extent of their defeat and of their obligations. An ever greater number were beginning to see the futility of wilful blindness or resentment, and coming to the conclusion that it was better to face conditions and seek a way of meeting them. Also the mere economic situation did not seem as hopeless to the Germans as it does today. Work was beginning to be generally resumed. The mark had depreciated until its value was about two cents, but compensation for most grades of work and returns on most varieties of investments had risen in proportion to the mark's fall. The purchasing value of the mark within Germany was then only a shade above its actual value on the world market. The entire social fabric seemed to be organizing itself upon a basis approximating the actual economic condition of the country.

Everything below the surface, to be sure, politics and the whole spiritual life of the country, was as chaotic as it is today. But the momentary physical and economic relief gave some real impetus toward an attempt at broad reconstruction, and made it possible for an observer to get an idea of the direction the reconstruction will ultimately take, the principles that have a chance to survive through the process, and the

spiritual resources which, released by the revolution, will give those principles the necessary force.

My chief concern was the study of these spiritual forces. These may indeed manifest themselves in any of the larger fields of activity: in economics and politics, religion, education, or in art. I am not a student of economics or of politics. My investigations in this field were merely to test the state of mind with which the people were meeting the political situation, and the spiritual attitude they assumed to the supreme economic problem of their daily bread. I found a situation so confused and so threatened by distress and passion, that positive spiritual forces were exerting no influence over it as yet. I have not dared to venture upon a description of the religious life of new Germany. There were evidences of changes that may in time have large importance, but they do not lend themselves to either fair or adequate treatment. The institutional church of Germany had allowed itself to become so entirely a part of the state that, when the latter fell, a full share of the discredit rested upon the church. The laws of the new government, intended to guarantee a greater freedom to religious expression, could do little to produce a new spirit. Whatever attempts at organized expression of a renewed religious spirit I could find were quite apart from the church and so vague that any description would lead to false impressions. In liberal education a new spirit is calmly exerting itself and is squarely and bravely meeting the new conditions. My main interest, however, is centered upon the mind and spirit of men and peoples as expressed in literature, and upon the spiritual forces that men and peoples evidence in their attitude to the great expressions of literature.

In teaching German literature the question of the relation of the drama to the ruling principles and forces of life is constantly brought into the foreground. The drama is considered by most German authors and critics to be the highest form of literary expression. Even the ordinary theater-goer has a peculiar reverence for what the German calls a drama as distinguished from a play, and he considers sacrilegious any attempt

to make the drama a mere form of entertainment or a source of profit. The object of the dramatist is to create in his characters living men, who embody, or come into conflict with, the fundamental forces of life. The German dramatist must have not only the ability to see and express such forces, but also a sufficiently strong faith in the possession of them by man to make the drama convincing. Where such faith is lacking, the dramatist is expected to show at least a strong longing for it. The German audience, by national habit, is constantly looking for evidence of this faith in the great characters before it, in order that each hearer may acquire an insight into the fundamentals of his own life.

The question often arose in my classes, whether this was really a guiding principle of the German drama. Therefore, when the opportunity came to test this thesis, by observing dramatist and stage and audience in a serious crisis, I was glad to seize upon it. My leave of absence gave me the opportunity which rarely comes to a student of literature: to test in the reality of actual events the statements concerning the German drama which I had taught in my classes. If, in the emergency, dramatists could be found attempting to express faith, or at least a strong longing for faith, in a new German character, if audiences could be found eagerly searching the dramas for a faith to serve as a basis for individual and national reconstruction, then an important question in the study of the German drama would be answered, and it would be possible to determine the state of mind which has the greatest chance of outlasting the present crisis and ultimately controlling reconstruction.

I devoted the largest part of my investigation to the situation in Berlin and Munich, because these cities are the most active and dominating centers of Germany, and because they are most opposed to one another in purpose and method. I went to Weimar to observe the interesting attempt to reestablish its traditional spiritual leadership. Such other German cities as I visited, among them Hamburg, Hannover and Leipzig, were in the main following the lead of Berlin and Weimar. They

were important simply in their special interpretation of the forces emanating from these centers. In Salzburg, I witnessed a strong concerted effort by the leaders of Austria to devise a program of spiritual reconstruction by enlisting the power of art in saving what remains of the country.

The first result that I must record is purely negative: not one of the poets, old or new, has enough faith or enough insight in redeeming forces to be able to express such faith clearly, or to present it to the people with strong conviction. It is encouraging, however, to note that the foremost poets of the nation are not giving themselves over to despondency, but are trying to rise above the confusion and to calm the disturbed spirits of the people, hoping that serenity will give them light and insight. A similar longing to prepare the way for faith in a new spirit governs the ventures of Weimar and Salzburg. The most important discovery, however, is that there has arisen throughout Germany a new audience which has developed a strong consciousness of the relation of the drama to personal and national character. In it are the people who are facing the vast responsibilities arising out of the revolution and are seeking for standards with which to judge them. They are convinced, moreover, that they cannot find such standards unless they know themselves and the fundamental national forces of which they are a part. They believe that they can gain this knowledge by studying the characters of the great dramas of their past and by encouraging the better dramatists of their own time to help them search. For this purpose they have organized powerful drama leagues.

It proved impossible to treat this audience merely in its relation to the drama and the theatre. The same people constitute that calm progressive element among the Democrats and Majority Socialists which is comparatively free from the general political confusion. The organizations for popular liberal education are composed almost entirely of these same people, and are able to maintain their strongly liberal, non-vocational character because of the high standards these men attain through their relation to art.

Because this new audience is still in the making, and its position within German life is far from being fully established or recognized, the description of its activity is constantly interrupted by personal interpretations. The results derive a considerable degree of certainty, however, from the fact that the activity of this group, especially in its relation to the drama, is not altogether new. The revolution has given it the first real opportunity and has enormously increased its size; but the history of its growth goes far enough back into German life to establish its permanency with some degree of assurance.

That which most impresses the observer with the power of this group, and gives him reason to believe that its standards will be those that ultimately will prevail in the process of reconstruction, is the extreme patience it shows in the search for standards and its serenity in the presence of the country's chaos.

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## GERMANY IN TRAVAIL

# GERMANY IN TRAVAIL

## I

### THE STRUGGLE WITH CONFUSION

#### I

**D**O THEY repent?" No other question was so incessantly put to me upon my return from five months travel through defeated Germany. In most instances it was the expression of a sincere desire to win back the faith in humankind that the sight of Germany in war had rudely shaken. To people of this frame of mind the visible repentance of the German people is as necessary a condition to an honest renewal of relations as the penitence of a serious transgressor in their own midst. The more definite their code of morals, the more insistent are they on the confessions of the sinner and the more prepared to receive him back within the fold, if he repent. Others who asked the same question nervously hoped for a negative answer. They had enjoyed to the full the hatreds of the war and the sense of superiority it gave them, or even the opportunities for material and spiritual profiteering, and now feared that they might lose their advantage. But there is no definite answer to this prevailing question.

The German nation is not down upon its knees before the other nations of the world. The sight of its defeat is horrible enough. The pillorying of defeated sinners is a spectacle that human justice craves and victors always demand. But to see a whole nation prostrate before its fellow nations to confess its sins, is a horror that becomes almost unendurable, even as you only visualize it in presence of the spiritual disintegrations of "unrepentant" defeat. You feel that the kneeling, if it were sincere, might well be a symptom of a disease so serious as to

seem incurable. The legend of the Prodigal Son is incomplete without the character of the father.

The German nation is repentant, however, in that it has turned against those men and thoughts that ruled it in the disastrous days before the war. This repentance is the more sincere in that the German people have turned against former thoughts more than against the men whom their peculiar system had made their rulers and, as such, executors of these thoughts. The princes are in exile and are easily forgotten by the great majority. Their replacement is a matter of political readjustment which can be organized with time and studious application and popular good will. The revolt against former habits of thought is a more serious affair. Those men who think at all now find that they can no longer trust the standards by which their thoughts were once directed. They find that the standards by which they judged their most intimate actions, their relations to their fellowmen, their attitude to the state and even to the church, were not genuinely theirs in the sense of being instinctive, but were artificially imposed upon them by a strange, mighty, selfish force that suddenly exploded in its last burst of overbearance. Now they must seek new standards by searching for those spiritual powers that are genuinely their own.

## II

What with defeat and economic and political hardships, however, the times are not conducive to this most difficult and delicate spiritual task. Defeat has thrown most Germans into a confusion which, however explicable, arouses the disgust one feels on seeing men becoming hysterical in face of sudden disaster. They have lost faith in themselves and in the existence of fair play anywhere. They hate the old régime that brought them into competition and war, just as they hate the thing that brought on their revolution and, as they see it, disorder and uncertainty. They impatiently distrust the men who offer a remedy for their misery. They close their eyes

and clench their teeth and try to live as best they can from day to day. If they have money, piles of it, they spend it madly and try only to avoid the actual clutches of the law. This money, they say, is no good anyway; it is only bulky paper that will at best buy nothing but narcotics. So why not live and get drunk on drink and food and jewels and excitement? If they have no money, they close their eyes and tighten their belts and dream. They dream their pet political and social theories and philosophies; but always with their eyes tightly closed to conditions as they really are. Any excess is good, if only the dream be colorful enough and take them far enough away from actual conditions. Those who are not rich enough to live to excess, or refined enough to dream to excess, exhaust themselves in despair and hatred and gloomiest apathy. And then a large part merely starves.

The disintegrating force of this confusion is clearly illustrated by the mere struggle for daily food. Partly out of a desire to supply all the people with at least a scant minimum, but partly also as a most powerful bid for popularity, the government has framed laws for the distribution of food. It is able to enforce them to only a very small extent, however. The situation of the country probably demands that these laws be as stringent as they are, but faithful observance of them would put everybody upon starvation rations. Consequently no one with money enough to pay the price demanded by the illicit trade will hesitate to break the law. If his conscience troubles him, he quiets it by saying to himself that, after all, the government is merely a makeshift as yet and not one in which he can place his faith, and that its laws are therefore not sacred. Food-profiteering is consequently one of the most flourishing occupations. In the summer of 1920 complaints against the profiteering by the hotels of Berlin became so persistent that the government was obliged to take action. The proprietors threatened to close down if the demands were insisted upon, and the government had to yield. This same situation has made the farmer secretive and extorting. He gives deceitful answers to the government officials who come to

take an inventory of his crops, and instead of bringing his food to market he sits at home to pass upon the bids and entreaties of the wealthy who come to him. He represents the latest and largest class of war profiteers. Whoever can afford it, is his willing victim. Even in the smaller cities, where almost every family has a back-yard garden, the worship of the new beast-god, the "hamster" or German chipmunk, is more universal than ever was the popularity of the "blond beast" in Germany's wildest hour. Several times a week each family sends a delegate out to the farm to play the "hamster," to gather in by begging and buying at any price what eggs or butter or other produce can be obtained. "To go hamstering" is the most popular of the new expressions that the times have added to the German language. The poor in every class of society, whose scant rations taste all the more bitter because they cannot take part in this new illicit national sport, waste themselves in futile anger and vainly threaten to emulate the Russian example and organize raids on the farmers. It is not in the German character to indulge in such an extreme disregard for authority; but at present the respect for law is dormant.

As in the search for food, so in most economic questions dire need and greed confuse the problem and upset the minds of the people. It seems improbable that these situations will be squarely met or adequate solutions will be found, until the people examine themselves and, on the basis of such an examination, clear the confusion of their minds and find a new faith to rise again above the stage of mere animal existence.

### III

The efforts toward political readjustment are beset with equal distress, and present as little chance for the thorough examination and the calm and patient application necessary to revise old standards or search for new ones. Not a single one of the broader national movements that seek to make adjustments to the new conditions presents a clear outline.

The revolution itself appears to have been an outburst of uncontrollable natural forces rather than the expression of any large popular will. It seems simply to have been the inevitable result of an unsuccessful war waged for four years on the basis of general conscription. Most Germans now admit that their army was in a sadly demoralized condition; but conditions behind the lines during those days seem to have been even less stable. The spirit of the country had grown increasingly seditious since the impossible winter of 1916, when the people were forced to live on turnips and on bread half filled with sawdust. The ghastly pallor that that winter placed upon the faces of the children was too strong a competitor to the frantic exhortation of the military authorities to carry on. At the first undeniable evidence of defeat the country broke down from sheer exhaustion, and the revolution that followed was due to this rather than to the American demands for democratization or to the agitation of the German Socialists.

The Socialists took control, merely because they were the only organized body that was prepared even theoretically for the emergency. Many of them were well-intentioned, a few were able, but the great majority were inexperienced and incompetent. Most of the departments were poorly manned, money was scarce, and disorder soon prevailed. The chaos was increased by a competition for the highest places between the two principal factions of the Socialists. This competition was ended by putting in charge of the highest offices a representative of each of the factions, who quarreled with each other over every important order. When this situation became impossible, the extreme Left was ousted from the government and went into opposition. The Majority Socialists now had to bear the entire odium for the chaos of the country, especially since they held control without legal sanction. They determined to secure that sanction from the people by issuing a call for the Constituent Assembly. From time to time the elections to that assembly were postponed, simply because the provisional government had no definite plan for a constitution.



The helpless officials eagerly seized upon some constructive suggestions which appeared in a newspaper article by Hugo Preuss; and, although Preuss was not a Socialist but a Democrat, they called upon him to frame the constitution. The elections to the assembly favored the liberal parties, Majority Socialist and Democratic. The vote at these elections, however, is construed in Germany today as expressing not so much a democratic conviction as a general desire for law and order with which to get under way.

The signing of the treaty came in the midst of the Constituent Assembly. I asked several of the men who had been most prominent in urging the signing of that treaty, and each one gave the same answer: he was not sure that he had acted wisely. You cannot get a more definite answer to any of the leading questions in Germany today. The condition of the country is still so chaotic that its leaders cannot see clearly or have definite convictions. At the time most Germans evidently thought that the treaty was largely a bluff; but they were soon undeceived. With the resulting despair came a strong wave of nationalism and a popular swing to the Right. The people as a whole quickly reasoned that, since the new order was bringing confusion and oppression, the old order must be restored. This mood was encouraged by reactionary agitators, who, as soon as they had the slightest success, lost their heads and organized the stupid and criminal attempt in the spring of 1920, headed by Kapp and Ludendorff, to reinstate the old régime. They acted too quickly and with too much of the old Prussian spirit. Though the Socialist government at first gave way, it soon managed to drive them out again by organizing a general strike throughout the empire. But the strike with its agitation was also too violent a measure to combat a movement so little real. Within the industrial centers of the Ruhr and Saxony it set in motion radical elements which had to be put down by force. Because on the one hand the treaty in forbidding a militia required a professional army, and on the other hand the government Socialists forbade men of their party to take up the profession of soldier, Noske was

obliged to move against the Ruhr with a reactionary army, hostile to his methods. This army answered red excesses with white terror, and so increased the confusion and the unpopularity of the government in the country at large.

In the midst of this turmoil the campaigning for the elections to the first German Parliament began. It was merely an insane clash of emotions. Chauvinism won and put in control Hugo Stinnes and his clever helpers, who roughly represent the biggest industries of Germany. The government bloc that assumed control was clearly obedient to the wishes of Stinnes, though he himself kept in the background. It was popularly called the "legalized Kapp Putsch." The defeated Moderate Socialists went over to the opposition. Their control and their program of socialization had utterly failed. In combining more closely with the extreme Left, moreover, they found themselves deprived of all convincing party propaganda excepting the cry of passion. So Germany today is roughly divided into two passionately opposed camps. On the Left they cry: "Down with religion and the church and capitalism is done for and Utopia will come!" and on the Right: "Down with the Jews, the enemies of religion and the instigators to bolshevism, and order will be restored and prosperity rise again!"

Because of his opposition to the reparation agreement Stinnes withdrew his party from the government in the spring of 1921 and the Majority Socialists half-heartedly relinquished their opposition. Thereby the dominant power within the government bloc fell to the lot of Germany's great neutral party, the Catholic Center, whose party program is best described by the single word, compromise. To meet the new situation it characteristically changed front. The right wing under Fehrenbach, which had held to Stinnes, surrendered the party leadership to the more radical wing under Wirth and Erzberger. Because of the unpopularity of the decision of the Entente in regard to the division of Upper Silesia, the Wirth Cabinet had to resign in October 1921. No other way could be found to form a government, however, than to persuade Wirth again to undertake the formation of a cabinet.

He succeeded under most curious circumstances, which show that Germany's progress toward political stability is negligible. Wirth's own party, the Center, and the Democrats permitted members to join only as individuals, without a guarantee of party support. The Majority Socialists, on the other hand, rallied more closely to the Chancellor and even persuaded the Independent Socialists to abate their opposition.

So the whole political situation is a brew of seething uncertainties. The reason lies partly in the general confusion of mind in Germany, heightened by the economic turmoil of the times. But the awkwardness of popular political thought combined with an unyielding party dogmatism is even more to blame. The Germans are hopeless dogmatists. Each man has his pet little faith in his own careful formulation. Every question you put as to his views on the social or political, economic or cultural conditions of his country is an occasion for him to expound his own philosophy and then violently to attack the Treaty of Versailles; but always he will end in an even more violent attack upon those of his own countrymen who hold views different from his own. Germany's greatest disease has always been this sort of dogmatism. Out of it grew German efficiency and superspecialization, so lacking in broader outlook that it could be perverted by clever systems of control to any end whatever. Today it acts as the most disturbing obstacle to the process that would restore some sort of balance to the national mind, suffering under the shock of defeat and revolution. An examination of the principal political parties of Germany makes one inclined to agree with the conviction of the many earnest men whom I approached, that Germany's political reconstruction must wait upon a thorough regeneration of the people.

The party of the extreme Right, the National People's Party (all parties must have a democratic name, of course), is in the control of the old Junker crowd with its unabashed monarchial and agrarian political rhetoric. Its members are bombastic sentimentalists, none of whom are able to realize the extent to which conditions in the country have changed.

They are conscious, however, of two political assets which they industriously nourish; the traditional affection for a divinely appointed ruler, and among the unthinking the unbridled passion of resentment against the victor. On the crest of the wave of nationalism which swept the country at the elections in 1920 they managed to secure 65 seats. Their immediate program is purely negative. They want to prove the impotence of the present government, hoping that a general confusion will make necessary a reinstatement of their former "efficiency." They speak rhetorically of a return of the old emperor; but if, as they suspect, the Hohenzollern House has permanently lost its cause, they would as readily welcome the rule of a Wittelsbach to bring them and their system back to power. Since their end is, according to their claim, divinely inspired, they resort to any means whatever, even to plotting in conjunction with the extreme Communists. Individually they are a sad lot. If they have money, they use its power to evade the laws and to organize revels, at which they try to console themselves for the loss of the extravagant court functions. If they have no money, they weep and grieve and exhaust their starved bodies with feasts of hating. Their blindness makes them ridiculously futile. I met one of their leaders, after a meeting of the party in Berlin, in high spirits because a half dozen women of the people had joined their ranks within a fortnight. He seemed to see the entire city population thronging back into the fold.

The German People's Party is practically the creation of Hugo Stinnes, the supreme industrial magnate of new Germany. Germany is full of stories of the plots and machinations of Hugo Stinnes. It seems that his strangle hold upon a large part of German industry was gained by the shrewd exploitation of the contract he made with the government during the war to rob the factories of Belgium and Northern France. He managed to arrange these operations so that none of the restitutions demanded by the treaty result in a personal loss to him. He is really the uncrowned ruler of the economic institutions which the old system had carefully developed for

its own purpose and for the recasting of which the new government has enunciated radical principles, though it has not been able to apply any of them to an appreciable extent. Stinnes, I am sure, is a man interested in the power of his purse rather than in the welfare of his country. His entry into politics, at the time of the national elections in 1920, was an attempt to find an efficient substitute for the old deposed monarchy to act as guardian of his treasury. He bought control wherever it was on sale. Forty per cent of the German press is said to belong to him, and his precautions went even to the extent of acquiring an interest in some of the highly professional critical journals.

Before the national elections the German People's Party was a rather insignificant remnant of the nationalistic, semi-liberal parties of the old régime. By clever organization and vigorous propaganda Stinnes secured 61 seats for it in the Reichstag. Its program is squarely conservative along old capitalistic lines. Its appeal is in its promise of a quick return to prosperity and of protection against attacks upon capital by the Socialists. It takes no definite stand on the question of monarchy, though it offers a safe retreat to all those who are sentimentally attached to the old rulers but have not the courage to denounce the new constitution openly. Consequently the German People's Party becomes the refuge of most of the small capitalists of the country, of a large part of the petty bureaucrats of the old régime, and of most of the Protestant teachers and preachers. From among the last group the rhetoricians of the party are recruited, but the control and command rests solely with Stinnes and the lieutenants of big industry.

The Catholic Center is very much the same in size and program that it was before the war. It is a well-organized, highly disciplined party, held together by church authority and frankly admitting and following a policy of political opportunism. Its real leader is said to have been Matthias Erzberger, often described as the best hated man in Germany, who was under constant persecution from reactionary zealots

and was finally murdered on August 26th, 1921. Erzberger was a strong liberal and until the elections of 1920 held his party sternly to the support of the Majority Socialists in spite of violent internal opposition from South German members. Because these elections, however, expressed a decided popular turn to the Right, he had to relinquish his leadership to the conservative wing in accordance with the established discipline of his party. But when, in the spring of 1921, Stinnes refused to let his party approve of the reparation agreement and the Majority Socialists again were forced to enter the government bloc, thus giving it a more radical complexion, Erzberger resumed control. Though his lieutenant, Dr. Wirth, acted as Chancellor, Erzberger was really the dominant force in the government. Fear of what he might do probably maddened reactionary fanatics into killing him.

The Democratic Party is another party of compromise. In the Constituent Assembly it was very numerous. At that time it had received the votes of all who wished to confess democratic leanings, either because they were sincere or simply in order to mollify the Entente while it was preparing the treaty. At the last election it secured only 45 seats, and even now its members are not necessarily honest democrats. Both of the conservative parties and the Center ban Jews from their ranks, so that all Jewish voters are forced to join one of the Socialist parties or the Democrats. As a result all conservatives of Jewish extraction ally themselves to the latter party, whatever the shade of their conservatism; and thus make impossible a clear party program. On the other hand, the best idealistic liberals and many of the foremost intellectual leaders of the country are members of the Democratic party, and win a great national respect for it because of their enlightened liberalism. The most respected element of the daily press is in the control of its members. And yet its influence is strangely weak, owing partly to its false composition and partly to the tragic circumstance that here, as everywhere in the present crisis, the best idealists lack the power of translating their principles into practical action.

The three remaining parties are socialistic labor parties grading from mere progressives to extreme Communists. This general group polled forty-four per cent of the 26,000,000 votes at the national elections in 1920. If it were united, it could easily sway the policy of the country; but its three parties fight with each other more dogmatically even than with the parties to their right. The old Majority Socialists contain most of the skilled laborers and all the large body of German liberals who prefer the slight Marxian dogmatism of this party to the political ineffectiveness of the Democrats. The Majority Socialists still have 110 seats in the Reichstag, more than any other single party. Their program is one of progressive social and political evolution. They still are Marxian in name and still use the vocabulary of class warfare; but all this appears principally as party habit, developed through party traditions and propaganda. Occasionally a fleeting hope of winning back the dissenters into the fold gives new strength to the habit. But when they actually inaugurate laws for new social and political control, they ride with fair command and much careful reckoning the wave that is rolling Europe along to new organizations.

The Independent Socialists function principally as an opposition party to the Majority Socialists. They have no other program than to prove the older party poor Socialists. They accuse the older party of lack of class consciousness and claim that it abuses the authority of Marx. Marx is the Bible of all the socialistic parties in Germany, each claiming that it alone reads and interprets him aright. Because the Independent Socialists have no definite program of constructive action, they do not realize the responsibility of government, and therefore engage in extravagant propaganda of class rule, revolutionary action and full and immediate socialization of public utilities. Because the Majority Socialists were popularly held responsible for the chaotic conditions of the provisional republican government, the Independent Socialists had unexpected success at the elections of 1920 and secured 80 seats. This success, however, was little to their advantage, inasmuch

as it united moderates with irreconcilable extremists. I visited their palatial Berlin club rooms in the early August of 1920, just at the time when it seemed possible that the Russians might break through the Polish army into Germany in an attempt to spread the Bolshevist revolution through Europe. But in spite of the cynical glee of anticipated triumph that held the party together at the time, the melodramatic gathering of whispering groups, scattered through the rooms, gave me a sense of the ludicrous ineffectiveness of these people. The country merely smiled at their extravagant threats. At their convention in the fall of 1920 they fought each other so violently over the party attitude to Lenine's commandments of the Third Internationale that the party split and sixty per cent of the members went over to the Communists. The remaining forty per cent are moderates who would sacrifice but a shade of party convictions if they were to rejoin the original Majority Socialists; but party dogmatism and the comfort of irresponsible opposition restrain them from taking that step.

Because of this rift the Communist Party of Germany is at present of unwieldy size. It represents 3,200,000 voters. Its program consists theoretically of allegiance to the Russian leadership in World Revolution and Dictatorship of the Proletariat; actually it is a blind passion for some radical change which might improve the personal fortune of the individual members. Too many stories of Russian misery and Bolshevist misrule penetrate into Germany to make the desire for a Russian alliance, even among the most illiterate and starving, more than merely theoretical. The Communist leaders are of two groups. Some few of them are highly refined idealistic dreamers and poets who are able to divorce communistic ethics from Bolshevist practice and who revel in delightful dreams of blessed Utopias. Because the rank and file of German Communists are recruited from the most illiterate section of the population, the effect of these dreamers is not so disintegrating as it otherwise would be. The other leaders are demagogues who delight in their power to sway the masses as they please. I spoke to some of the most prominent and



found that they had far more ambition for political power than conviction regarding the principles which they hurled at the confused minds of their blind followers. They do not hesitate to boast that they can make these hungry unthinking people do as they will.

Thus not one of the German political parties has convictions sufficiently clear to enable it to assume a strong leadership. Nor has a single one sufficient strength in the Reichstag to govern without compromise both to the Left and Right. Above all things the country needs an education toward liberalism. If the spirit of party dogmatism can be checked, there is likely to be a significant strengthening of the intelligent progressives among the Majority Socialists and Democrats. Within this group the constructive policy for the nation must originate.

The chaos of the country is still so great and the problems confronting it so clouded, that even the clearest in this group are confused or fantastic in their views. I managed to insinuate myself into a closed meeting of the Democratic Party just before the opening of the Reichstag for its fall meeting in 1920. The principal speaker was Professor Troeltsch, considered by many Germans of various parties the strongest and clearest liberal in Germany today. He reviewed the course of the revolution and tried to find some way out of the chaos. His remedy was rather far-fetched. He thought that in order to regain stability and to win back the respect of other nations, Germany must for a time organize on the plan of a greater Switzerland. A new federation of states should be created with Prussia dismembered, so as to put an end to its hegemony. A decentralized Germany, united by close ties, would allow each state to develop economically in accordance with its peculiar resources and would offer the only feasible remedy for the financial chaos. Under such a scheme Germany would revert to an agricultural state as far as possible; she would be able to feed herself, and, by thus cutting down the necessity for many of her imports, she would more quickly reestablish a trade balance. The excess industrial labor would be

systematically distributed to work on farms. Any excess beyond that would have to emigrate, but in an organized way so as not to lose the spiritual connection at least with the mother country. A militia, he thought, recruited in large part from the farming classes would be very effective in putting down any attempts at violence from radicals and reactionaries alike. After a lengthy period of recuperation by this method Germany could again take up her former history.

The picture is too far removed from probable events. The discussion from the floor, however, was far more confusing. There was talk of opportunities of revenge and for sudden recovery when the members of the Entente begin to quarrel with one another and similar sentimental dreams common among stupefied Germans.

Shortly after this meeting I called upon the little, stoop-shouldered, emaciated, but extremely keen editor of *Die Glocke*, Max Beer, whom the Majority Socialists consider one of their most intelligent expounders. He is an author well known in England, where he lived for many years as correspondent of *Vorwaerts*, and wrote an excellent *History of British Socialism*. I was surprised that his idea of a remedy for the German confusion was almost identical with that of Professor Troeltsch, though it had a more socialistic coloring. The state, he figured, could supply from its reservations one hundred thousand families with five hectares of land each, leased to them for two hundred years. He would abolish fifty per cent of the universities and found agricultural schools, which would lay particular stress on truck gardening and poultry farming. He was opposed to emigration, however, and thought that all excess labor could be employed in building homes for workers.

If these are among the clearest political thinkers of Germany, the country is still far from recovery. Yet these men see at least that conditions have changed. Both made the remark to me that probably only five per cent of the population is able to see that radical changes have taken place; that four out of five use this knowledge to profiteer; that only one per

cent devoted itself to an honest effort at rebuilding, and only a small fraction of that one per cent has any real ability to do so.

## IV

But even though confusion so prevails in economic and political questions that no clear analyses of them are being made, and people are therefore blind to the fundamental tasks confronting them, yet there are impressive numbers of men, mostly among the laboring and lower middle classes, who at least know that they do not see and are determined to acquire the ability to see, however unaccustomed and slow the process may be. The belief that a greater intimacy with the best of art and education will best help them know themselves and the basic human and national powers in themselves, is a German tradition the importance of which the revolution brought home to these classes for the first time. I was told that the little Berlin suburb of Karlshorst, where mostly humble people live, assembled in town meeting after the revolution and allotted five million marks for higher education for their daughters instead of thinking of obtaining food.

With the responsibilities which the revolution brought to them, the people of this class seem to have acquired also the consciousness of their dependence on art, that formerly was so characteristic of the educated middle classes. Like the latter they seem to have a realization of what art has accomplished in German crises. To the German people the Renaissance, for example, is principally the Reformation with Luther as its hero, not so much because he gave them religious freedom, as because with his translation of the Bible he created for them a common language and made them free to express themselves intelligibly from one end of the nation to the other. The Germans also consider the great European political developments and upheavals of the eighteenth century as quite secondary to the literary revolution of their "Storm and Stress," which gave them confidence in themselves and a consciousness of national individuality.

But even this instinctive turning to art to find the way out of spiritual distress is not free from the dangers of confusion. Fanatics are attempting to distort it, and profiteers are scheming to use its power for personal gain. So-called prophets travel from city to city and exhort the inhabitants to congregate in the squares to sing and dance to regain health and joy in life. Large audiences are attracted by strange performances of new dances which in some mysterious way are to restore a new spiritual balance. New fads in art have never before made so bold or so successful an appeal for devout congregations of faithful dupes.

The most profitable distortion of this kind is the widely spread society of Dadaists, which through its art offers a final solution of every physical and spiritual problem. I visited its headquarters and publishing house in Hannover under the guidance of a literary critic of that city. I found a few rooms stacked to the ceiling with pamphlets and a few of their latest pictures tacked against the shelves. At least they called them pictures. They were boards plastered over with transfer tickets, small scraps of newspapers, wisps of hair, and a little hay and mud. The publisher and priest was a keen-eyed and raven-haired hunchback. With his cynical smile he asked me to guess at the titles of the pictures, and when I answered in a bantering way, he was a bit offended, though he tried not to show it. I tried to get him to tell me something about his Dadaism. He made a speech something like a barker at a circus about ultimate value and last secrets and "see for yourself." His talk came fast and his mocking eyes danced; but he explained nothing at all. When he heard that I was from the land of the universally desired dollar, he tried to talk business and his eyes danced even more. It seems that less than a year ago he had been a type-setter at a very low salary, but had saved fifty marks. With this and what money he could borrow on his unlimited nerve he had published his first Dada pamphlet of poems solving all problems but with no sense or rhyme or reason. The fish bit lustily and in a year he had published ninety volumes in half a million

copies. He is a shrewd communistic capitalist. He gave me a few typical pamphlets to ponder over. Before I left he introduced the youngest priest of Dadaism, his little month-old son, who sang some very good Dada songs, though he could not yet pronounce the mystic word itself, but would do so within a very short time, his father thought.

Dadaism is advertised as the ultimate development of expressionism. It claims to express the truth itself in its abstract reality by means of the most real materials of life and without selection. It turns its back upon all the media of the artists of bourgeois society, such as perspective and color, rhyme and logic, and harmony and counterpoint. It advocates new materials, such as bits of paper and dirt, and the new technique of "simultaneity" and "bruitism." Finally it boasts of destroying art itself and of being the international revolution. It is the keenest bit of advertising I have ever seen, expertly adjusted to the condition of a fagged and bewildered nation. I have before me a novel of forty-nine pages, called *Second through Brain*, a bewildering confusion of adventure, cynicism, eroticism, even of type thrown helter skelter on the page. One tenth of the space is used to warn against imitations of the only true Dadaism, obtainable at Steegemann's in Hannover. Incidentally, this publishing house is using its present prosperity to publish very fine de luxe editions of standard authors, so that it might still have some business if the country should return to reason.

The creed of Dadaism demands:

"1. The international revolutionary union of all creative and intellectual persons in the world on the basis of radical Communism.

2. The introduction of progressive unemployment by means of a comprehensive mechanization of every activity. Only by unemployment does the individual acquire the chance of gaining knowledge of the truth of life and of finally accustoming himself to experience life.

3. The immediate expropriation of property and the communistic feeding of all people, as well as the building of

beautiful communistic cities which shall educate man to freedom."

The Central Council favors:

"(a) The daily, public dinner of all creative and intellectual people on the *Potsdamer Platz* (Berlin);

(b) That all preachers and teachers subscribe to the dadaistic creed;

(c) Relentless warfare against all so-called spiritual workers (Socialist poets), against their concealed middle-class ethics and against expressionism and post-classical education;

(d) The immediate building of a national art-house;

(e) Introduction of the simultaneous poem as official communistic prayer;

(f) Surrender of the churches for performances of bruitistic, simultaneous and dadaistic poems (by this they mean poems accompanied by an orchestra of typewriters, kettledrums, rattles and pot-covers);

(g) Formation in every city with over 50,000 inhabitants of a dadaistic soviet to rearrange life;

(h) Immediate execution of dadaistic propaganda with 150 circuses to enlighten the proletariat;

(i) Control of laws and ordinances by the dadaistic Central Council of the World Revolution;

(k) Immediate regulation of the sexual relationship in the international dadaistic sense by dadaistic headquarters."<sup>1</sup>

This is, of course, merely a wildly extravagant perversion of the consciousness within the German people of the intimate relation between their art and their lives. It is keenly adjusted to the confusions and the political extravagances of the times and therefore has a rather formidable success. But with the lessening of post-war diseases it will quickly die out, while the sane and less sensational movements in art and education will continue to grow in importance and influence.

The general confusion, however, and the delicacy of the task, which demands that the very fundamentals of life be

<sup>1</sup> *En Avant Dada*, Richard Huelsenbeck, Hannover, 1920, p. 29.

reviewed and revalued, are still clouding the minds of even the most honest and courageous thinkers. As a result overzealous and oversensitive investigators are making curious perversions of history which find a large response. I met a group of splendidly refined men in Munich who, in their effort to find a basis for a new unified German culture, have transplanted themselves back into the Middle Ages and deny all later German developments including the Reformation. They place the responsibility for the present debacle not so much upon the modern statemen as upon Luther and the whole of German culture born of Protestantism, particularly upon Kant and Goethe and Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. They attack Luther for having torn asunder the heart of the nation with complicated problems, and Kant for having stifled the nation's life by throwing it into a mad whirlpool of dialectics. They recommend to German youth that it disregard all modern philosophy and apply itself again to a study of the old German mystics of the Middle Ages and thus regain its simplicity. Reprints of these old mystics are being sold in large editions. But such distortions are slowly being overcome, and there appear more clearly the broad outlines at least of the essential problem.

## v

When the certainty of coming defeat slowly forced itself upon the minds of the people and patriotic enthusiasms weakened, disturbing criticism of the government and of the nation's very foundations arose. Those men who had the power and the courage to think began to search the history of their people and to examine the validity of the principles and of the national phrases with which the people had been urged to war. Dimly they began to suspect that there was something radically wrong with the fundamental standards by which they were living. They began to see that the war had merely accentuated that wrong to the point where it must be faced. They caught a blurred vision of how a powerful force had tampered with their lives for generations, had robbed them of

their individuality and made them into mere instruments. Just how they could thus have been abused, they do not as yet quite know. Even the bare outline of such a vision was terrifying in that it threatened the truth of every accepted standard. When, however, the picture takes on sharp outlines, and becomes clear to the whole nation, it will be the principal incentive to definite reconstruction.

Meanwhile to an important minority the picture is beginning to take the following form: On the one hand appears the unselfishly acquired idealism of Kant and Goethe and Schiller and Wilhelm von Humboldt and Stein and Hardenberg, a basis upon which the nation might have developed true to its best qualities. On the other hand some, at least, are beginning to see the true nature of that one-tracked, selfish system we call Prussianism and of the insidious fight which it has waged for generations against the finer, unsuspecting and unprotected idealism. Because of the refined, delicate qualities of idealism, the more robust material system could almost imperceptibly force it into its service. Because idealism held the best affections of the thinking and flattered the sentimentalities of the unthinking, the system borrowed its language and manners, until like a true parasite it had assumed the outward appearance of its victim and thus could all the better work its cleverly concealed will. Finally it was enjoying from the people the respect and loyalty they owed to their idealism and in the latter's cloak it led them to their present downfall. It was a slow, relentless and insidious process. The system had, indeed, the honest strength of strict limitation of purpose; but to succeed it had to destroy the only basis of life of the nation that it wished to use. Its own life, therefore, had of necessity to be short, in spite of large ephemeral successes and in spite of such geniuses of restricted purpose as Frederick the Great and Bismarck and Treitschke. Success and genius, and the subtle borrowing of its garb, made it so attractive that the few alert and sensitive spirits of the nation, who before the war sensed and tried to disclose its real nature, could not convince their hearers.



But today there are not a few who know that here lies the real disease of the nation, — men who are directing their eyes boldly upon the picture, however disheartening its aspect and however painful the conviction that accustomed standards must be revamped and freed from the old taint and that Kultur must be refined to culture. A more difficult spiritual problem cannot confront an individual, much less a nation. Kultur had not been a matter of the individual. It was a culture minutely prepared and sternly dictated: replete with the comfort of a choice already made. Now each man is to be forced to make new judgments on his individual responsibility, and yet upon the basis of his national character. The process must be slow. Its first stage is purely negative; the old standards seem to be wrong. As a result men do not know what to think or do. Then those who have the courage strike out for a new balance. Their venture still is more a longing than an attainment. Some of the gentlest have retired wholly within themselves to dream of a spiritually regenerated and united nation, and unfold fantastic sentimentalities. Others have been given courage, because of their very yearning, to direct their eyes more squarely upon the essential problems, and they are making promising beginnings, though they themselves may still be near despondence. Their search for faith in life and in a nation is, however, the spectacle that held me during my stay with them and of which I shall speak in these essays. The process is one that will continue for a long time. My reports, therefore, will be only of the beginnings I have found, but these beginnings are not only interesting but of extreme importance in the study of reconstruction on its spiritual and, therefore, most important side.

## VI

Before I started out for Germany, I felt sure that if there were any one within the nation who had his eyes wide open upon the real conditions of the country and possessed the courage and insight and faith to lead the way along a new

and truer path, he would be found among the people's greatest poets. Some of the younger poets, I thought, who at the front had been forced into most intimate contact with the system and seen it crumble under stress after almost crushing the very life out of its subjects in an effort to maintain itself, would have been able to see its nature clearest and would have the clearest view of those powers which might bring the nation back to itself. But I could not find a single poet of the younger generation who had sufficiently risen above the confusion that surrounded him. Not one of them has given testimony of sufficiently strong faith in definite redeeming forces. There is not a single clear, convincing composition in a new drama or novel which unfolds before the people the forces that are trying to awaken within them. The confusion, and the jealousies and prejudices arising from confusion, demand for such a task unusual clearness of sight and force of conviction.

Ernst Toller is the most promising of the younger poets of Germany. His drama, *Die Wandlung*, is an intensely bold human struggle to clear from cant and from national and personal conceit the path toward a solid foundation. Political prejudices within the audience, however, not only over-emphasize the minor weaknesses of the drama, but turn the very intensity of it into inartistic rhetoric. The reactionary government of Munich is still detaining him in prison because he took control of the Munich mobs during the last communistic uprisings, though everybody admits that he did so merely in the hope of checking their excesses. Meanwhile the extreme Socialists of Prussia repeatedly try to hoot his play out of the theatre because they consider it reactionary propaganda.

Richard Dehmel enlisted for the front in spite of his advanced years and went through all the hardships of active service because he longed as one of the nation's leading poets to be in the midst of his people's sufferings and most intense deeds in order to test his faith in them. He came out of the war with a scathing accusation of the system but clutching hard at his belief in the people. His death, which occurred

soon after the defeat, was brought on, as his most intimate friends informed me, by his inability to endure the spiritual dissolution of the country.

Gerhart Hauptmann is without any hesitation accepted in Germany as the foremost poet. I had the privilege of being his guest on several occasions and of listening as he spoke to me of his nation's distress. Hauptmann's deep and genuine sympathy has made him the unusual poet that he is. He always tried to protect the soul of his people against the system; nor was he ever liked by the system's zealous servants. During the war he was not very sure of himself, afraid to hurt his people, it seems, whichever way he spoke. So he became abstract or tried to save his faith by seeking human qualities in situations remote from the confusion immediately before him. He has grown very old and nervous and when he speaks is plainly confused, often stopping his pictures before they are completed and seeking a better way to shape what rises before him. But he is most calm when asked if he has any fear lest his people be unable to rise above the disintegration now at work. As he talked of this, his patience was the quality which impressed me most. He sees that it may take a very long time before the real spiritual growth of the people becomes apparent. He realizes that he himself may not live to see convincing expressions of it. But his quiet faith, in which there is no trace of resignation, is the most convincing individual testimony I found. His work meanwhile harks back to the realm of fairy story. He is even recasting some of his older dramas and changing them more into fairy tales as the expression of his quiet optimism. So while he knows no definite answer to any definite immediate problem, his message to the people is, "Be calm: do not forget that you have a soul which will awaken if you believe in it and give it time."

Thomas Mann of Munich, the greatest prose writer of Germany, is a man of quite another stamp. He is not one who sees large visions, but rather a keen analyst of the circumstances about him. Before the war he directed many a sharp criticism against the growing materialism of the country.

During the war he fought against the democratizing influences that were making themselves felt in the nation and wrote an impassioned defense of those forces of aristocracy which he believed necessary for the country's growth. In these writings his patriotism rather dulled his usually keen perceptions. But this patriotism was stressed by an intimately personal quarrel with his brother. Heinrich Mann was drawing popular caricatures of the Prussian system with cutting satire that deeply offended the older brother, who tried too hard to counteract such influences by means of his essays. In my conversations with him, however, I found little of the admirer of Prussia. The demand that he particularly insists upon is that the power of Prussia and with it the *furor politicus*, as he termed it, be thoroughly curbed. For only then will Germans turn to a real consideration of spiritual values, upon a regeneration of which, he insists, the welfare of the nation depends. He has too little of the quiet faith of Hauptmann, but at least he is using his influence as a leader of the nation to point out the sort of regeneration that goes to the very core of the country's life.

It is not the poets, however, who are giving the strongest impetus to the process of renewing standards. After all, they are not the moral persuaders of the people but its expressors, who give clear form to that within the people which is of vital strength, though not yet conscious of itself. Accordingly they fix upon the stages that the onward march has reached, and by revealing the marchers to themselves, and what they have done by virtue of themselves, they open up the road to further progress. But when the people are confused or lacking in genuine force, the nation's poets too are helpless and their speech lacks clearness and a confident point of view. The nation itself, though it may not be clearly conscious of its direction, must have the power in itself to march ahead and must give evidences of a will to exert that power.

## VII

Germany is today in a sad confusion and very many of its university men and others of its intellectual and moral leaders are badly mired in the general upset. But there is a strong minority of the people, mostly from the lower middle classes and the skilled workers, who are not only conscious that they must clear the paths for newer and truer progress, but have banded together into strong organizations for a common purpose. These are the men whom the old system had most completely tied; whom, according to its "efficient" wisdom, it had made very useful and quite prosperous at the expense of their individuality and the prerogative of thinking for themselves. The encouraging element in the revolt of these men is that it is not directed toward greater prosperity or even principally toward greater political freedom, though of course they have political organizations. Their most enthusiastic organizations are directed toward attaining fuller spiritual freedom and a clearer picture of themselves upon the basis of which such freedom can be won. I shall describe their efforts toward adult education in which there is no attempt at vocational training but simply a strong desire for a liberal culture, that they may know themselves more fully and better grasp their relations to each other and to the forces of society. Among preparatory school students I found a strange but interesting concerted effort to reinvestigate the principles of the accepted educational systems in order to make them conform more closely to the basic human needs of the youth. This effort culminated long before the war in a violent struggle against the system's pedagogues and against subservience of the home to the school. Throughout the country there are large and important drama leagues by which the people hope to make accessible to themselves the great poets of their past, to guard their great expressions against the corrupting influences now upon the country in its confusion, and also to encourage their living poets to help them find themselves.

In liberal education and in art they seek the means by which new spiritual standards may be made effective. The confusion threatens this search with the possibility of many serious mistakes. The habitual affections and comforts of old conditions as well as the glamour of new promises threaten to spoil the search with vain sentimentalities. Therefore, they are trying to prepare themselves by a liberalizing education, and in the visions of their poets they are seeking correctives, and direction. In times of national stress the people's attitude toward art has often been almost a religious one. Today this attitude is accentuated by the feeling that in every other phase of their living they are under the control of their victors. With their art, however, they are free to do what their personal convictions and desires dictate. The clearest indication of the coming reconstruction of Germany is the faith of an important minority that the great dramas, as the highest artistic expressions, provide the means to clear away the confusion by revealing that which is most genuine in themselves, and the calm determination of this minority to apply themselves to art with this purpose.

## II

### EDUCATION, OLD AND NEW

#### I

WHEN a national crisis reaches the point where old standards are discredited and new standards are demanded, the universities must clearly manifest their worth and prove the genuineness of their liberalism. For if liberalism be genuine, it will have not only the insight and the freedom from prejudice to make thorough and minute analysis of accustomed habits, but it will also have a full appreciation of those elements in the old standards which are still representative of the nation's life. By such liberalism alone can the universities lay the foundation for a revaluation. In former crises, in the eighteenth century and in the movement that culminated in the Revolution of 1848, the universities took a leading part in liberalizing thought. Today they are generally considered the centers of reaction, and in their passionate fight against the new they renounce even the freedom they attained in former struggles and champion the prejudices of feudal days.

Upon examination you find that in the materializing process of Prussia, especially during recent decades, the universities were more completely caught in the machine than any other of the large national institutions. This machine, cleverly conscious of its advantage, had made the universities into great training schools for its public and confidential servants. The university degree was an unflinching recommendation to the innumerable positions of trust which the system controlled in foreign service and in every conceivable branch of public life

within the empire: in administration, in judicial service, and in church and school. The command of the army alone, and a few positions of highest dignity in other branches, were preserved as prerogatives of birth. If only education was consistent with the aims and purposes of the system, its quality was preserved and liberalism, even, was encouraged. Academic freedom became increasingly the freedom of a protected privileged class. With the downfall of the system and the radical social changes resulting from the revolution, the inevitable results of such education became so evident that all respect by the people as a whole for higher education seemed endangered. The universities had not been institutions of liberal culture but highly specialized vocational schools. To the students the revolution brought serious uncertainties and new disquieting competitions. The church was freed from the control of the state; judgeships were to be awarded upon a broader basis than merely a university degree; promotions were to be determined by merit rather than by a definite period of service; some positions, such as those of municipal administration, were to become elective, while some of the free professions, such as that of the physician, were ultimately to be drawn into civil service. Therefore conformity to the new state of things demanded excessive sacrifice and more unselfish interest than vocational training can produce, or did produce in Germany.

Accordingly the large majority of alumni, students and faculty angrily went into opposition against the social change. Because the first contact with it was painful, they have refused to recognize it or to examine it. To be sure, the economic changes resulting from defeat affected the university class more painfully than any other single group. As the mark dropped in value, workers' wages rose almost in proportion to its fall, and business reorganization and profiteering still made existence comparatively carefree for the capitalists, both large and small; but professional incomes and salaries of the civil servant became more and more inadequate, and brought the educated middle class nearer to starvation than any other group in the



country. During the war these people in their patriotic fervor had invested their little savings in government bonds, the income from which shrank to a mere pittance with the depreciation of the currency. In addition this class had always been very proud, and had carefully manipulated its modest income to keep up appearances of dignity. Poverty to them, therefore, meant starving in a double sense. It is only human that their misery kept them from facing the situation bravely and set them in such an angry opposition to the new conditions that they were in no mood even to examine them.

This is the class that sends its sons to the universities. Under the old system university training was their special privilege. Today it cannot afford to supply its sons with the allowances necessary to support them while they get their training. But these sons inherit with their parents' poverty their pride, which has always made it seem undignified for them to work their way through college. Now they must work or give up their schooling; and because the latter would be the greater blow to their self-esteem they seek with grim determination the means of earning a scant living, under serious difficulties and with none of the cheerfulness of the American student. They drive cabs or clean the streets at night or sell second-hand books in carts at street corners. Meanwhile the sons of the new war rich or of the workers not only offer new competition, but have the money and the time to make that competition seem unfair, and they also crowd the universities beyond capacity. So everything accumulates to make the temper of the former educated class a menace to reconstruction.

Unfortunately the leaders at the universities, the faculties, have just as little courage. They too are suffering, and therefore violently attack the new order and wish that the old were back again. Thus they encourage the blindness of their students instead of being faithful to their calling and helping them to see. To confuse the situation even more, soon after the revolution the universities filled up with that large body-guard of the old régime which formerly would have trained in its own schools for commissions in the army. With the

dissolution of the army under the treaty they entered the universities for want of knowing what else to do. These men are using the higher schools as centers for their resentful propaganda, and find a fertile field in the confused state of mind of the traditional student.

During the communistic disorders throughout the empire in the early days of the revolution, it was the students who saved the country from extreme disorganization. Now they consider that the country is greatly indebted to them and under obligation to follow their lead. But instead of leading towards a new social or spiritual organization, they have become fomenters of monarchial reactions: at times of national elections the students join to defeat democracy, when disorder threatens they organize irregular bands and terrorize towns suspected of harboring radicals, periodically they set out upon Jew-baiting expeditions, and they otherwise obstruct the endeavors of the official government to bring order out of chaos.

## II

In the midst of the reactionary confusion of university life as a whole I found in the individual members of university faculties and in small groups of students the keenest insight into the present affairs of the country and the highest aims for national development. The selfishness and blindness of university life is at least being insistently attacked from within. Minority student organizations at every university are attempting to analyse the changes that the country is undergoing, and I found them persisting in their work in spite of much derision from their fellows and even some persecution. Faculty meetings since the revolution are said to be the scenes of violent combat between the reactionary majority and the few who, having the courage to look things squarely in the face, see that society has changed and that the university should make itself the leader of the new order.

In the description of political parties it was pointed out that among the leaders of the Democratic Party are those who

have the clearest insight into Germany's real conditions, and the strongest determination to lead the country in the direction of honest and sane recovery. Due to the respect these men command because of their unselfish rectitude, they exert an influence quite out of proportion to their party's strength. The strongest of these leaders are members of university faculties, men like Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber. Troeltsch, who is Professor of Philosophy at Berlin, has been Prussian Undersecretary of State since the revolution and has made his influence felt in every critical decision of the Prussian Ministry. Weber, until his death from overexertion in the summer of 1920, was Professor of Political Economy at the University of Munich and the most fearless and thorough champion of democratic thought in Germany. The loss of his leadership, just when Bavaria was beginning her sad rôle of impeding the empire's reconstruction by tactics of extreme reaction, was most unfortunate both for Bavaria and the empire as a whole. Such men attract within the universities a following which, though none too large, is extraordinarily strong and has, in spite of the reactionary attitude of the larger part of university circles, maintained among the people as a whole some respect for university training.

### III

During the earlier days of the revolution, when the Social Democrats were in more complete control of government than they are now, there was persistent demand that the universities be opened far more generally to the people as a whole and adapt their teaching more directly to the immediate economic needs of the people, or that, in order to save expenses, the various universities be consolidated into a few absolutely necessary ones, and purely "decorative" departments be eliminated. Owing chiefly to the respect for the small group of liberal-minded men about Professor Troeltsch, reason finally prevailed in this very ugly quarrel. Konrad Haenisch, who became Prussian Minister for Education and the Arts

after that position had been held by narrow-minded and dangerous fanatics, is a prominent Socialist but a highly cultured, fair, and liberal-minded man who guards most carefully the nation's rich intellectual resources. He has opened the universities to the people so far as he could without endangering their standards of scholarship. He is in the midst of the difficult task of devising effective means to liberalize teaching. But he has stopped all talk, at least within the government, of eliminating any of the departments of the universities. He is fully conscious that the universities are too vocational already and opposes all attempts to make them more so or to change them into a new kind of vocational schools for another class of the population. Where new departments were needed because of a broadening of the life of the country, he has created them, as, for example, the new courses in labor leadership at the University of Münster. But his efforts are more strictly directed toward liberalizing the spirit of the universities, in student body and faculty. He is wisely directing his efforts more toward the students than toward the teachers. I am told that his work is bearing fruit: that more and more are willing to open their eyes to the changes that have taken place and are beginning to realize that if they wish to enjoy the prerogatives of youth and to work toward leadership among their fellows, they must put themselves at the service of their new nation and make themselves indispensable to it.

## IV

Meanwhile, not so much outside of as side by side with university education, a new popular education movement has sprung into life. This is a movement toward liberal culture by adult workers whose economic fortunes had not permitted them such privileges in their younger days.

There have always been organizations for workmen's education in Berlin, but these were conducted by political parties, principally those of the Left, for purposes of party propaganda; or they were private undertakings, some more or less philan-

thropic, some purely commercial, which fed their members in a haphazard way on popular lectures.

When the revolution freed the workers from the spiritual bonds of the old régime and with the new freedom had come added responsibilities, the more thoughtful worker felt a keen desire for a broader education to enable him to approach his task intelligently. Within a short time scores of workmen's educational associations were formed in Berlin. But these groups were often controlled by sentimental theorists, incompetent educators, or dishonest special pleaders, who created confusion or even misdirected an honest search for knowledge. The University held itself aloof from the movement of workmen's education as it had done from the entire revolution. A few teachers maintained that it was the duty of the University to bring these groups together and to direct the work in the spirit in which the workers had conceived it. They were met by violent opposition from their colleagues, as though they were proposing to give valuable assistance to a dangerous enemy. But they insisted on their point and gradually won a small number of enthusiastic supporters. In the spring of 1919 the Prussian Cabinet forced consideration of the matter upon the universities by decreeing that at all universities in Prussia councils for popular education be established to give advice and aid to workers' educational associations. Through the breach thus made the interested members of the faculty directed their attack. Thus, though a large number of its members still persist in a reactionary attitude and grumble at the innovation as much as they dare, today the University officially plays an important part in the movement.

The aim of the interested educators was to combine the many associations into one large effective body, to define its aims, and to devise methods of realizing them. In March 1919 Professor Merz of the University, and Sassenbach, a member of the city council, formulated the principles upon which should be built the organization which they called the *Volkshochschule Gross-Berlin*. They persisted in their endeavors, and in the fall of 1919 the constitution was adopted

by representatives of the communities of Greater Berlin and of all the principal labor unions. The University was then forced to accept the situation, especially since the organization had soon grown to large dimensions. By the fall of 1920 it had absorbed most of the smaller organizations, and was conducting 135 courses with a faculty of 118 teachers.

The Association is supported by three institutions: the city communities which furnish the necessary finances, the established labor unions whose interest guarantees popular confidence, and the University which watches over the standards of the work. The University, to be sure, does not act officially through its Faculty, but through its Council for Popular Education. While this does not assure the support of all the members of the University, or even of a majority, it attaches to the work those most truly interested, and thus saves much friction and delay. The university faculties of Germany are only too justly accused of being stupidly reactionary, and so do not enjoy the confidence of a very large proportion of the people. The Prussian Cabinet therefore decreed that in addition to representatives of the Faculty the Council should contain specialists not connected with the University, the chairman and business manager of the Workmen's Educational Association, and six workmen's representatives. The executive committees of the Council is composed of an equal number of university men and of delegates of the Workmen's Educational Association.

In all departments of the Workmen's Educational Association care is taken to give as much attention to interested popular opinion as is consistent with the standards that the work must attain. The parliamentary functions are vested in what is called the Committee. This is a very large body. About fifty delegates to it are elected by the different communities of the city in proportion to their population. All unions of a membership of five thousand or more send delegates in proportion to their size, and with them are included also those political parties that maintain departments of cultural education, the expectation being that they will let the Workmen's Educational

Association do the work for them and thus separate education and party propaganda, as is proper. This group of unions and political parties also sends about fifty delegates. The faculty and the classes of the Workmen's Educational Association send twenty delegates, ten from each group. Finally, a few representatives of those popular educational associations not yet absorbed, and a few prominent scientists, artists and educators are invited by the Executive Council to become members.

The governing body of the Association is the Executive Council. This is composed of thirteen delegates chosen on the principle of proportional representation by the four main bodies of the Committee. To these are added the business manager of the Workmen's Educational Association, two experts in workmen's education, and one representative from each of the higher schools of the city: the University, the Institute of Technology, and the School of Commerce. This body is chosen for one year only.

The most important office is that of the business manager, who is the principal executive of the Association and the final authority in all its affairs. His personality may determine to a very large extent the success or failure of the undertakings, and great care is therefore taken in his choice. Three candidates are nominated by the University Council for Popular Education after conference with the Executive Council of the Workmen's Educational Association; from these three the Executive Council chooses a manager and their choice must be ratified by the Committee. According to the constitution, the business manager must resign if at any time he does not command the confidence of the Executive Council, expressed by a majority vote. As long as the Association enjoys the services of its present manager, Professor Merz, it is certain to be led extremely well. He is an energetic, practical idealist, whose eyes are open to the situation confronting Germany and whose will is steadfastly directed toward a sane solution.

The two principal bodies of the organization are so constituted as to give the widest possible representation to the workers and to the population from which they come, and at

the same time to include a strong corps of interested scholars to guard the standard of work. The Committee is intentionally made as large as practicable, because it is felt that the continuous and free discussion between scholars and workers will best clarify the aims of the Association, and lead to their being widely disseminated through the masses.

The purpose of the undertaking, as formulated by Professor Merz, is "to develop spiritually independent personalities, and to put them into intimate relation to society." In all respects the institution aims to serve the general culture of the citizens, and it in no wise gives the vocational training of the regular schools. The men within this movement seem clearly conscious that the higher schools have gained their vocational efficiency by the sacrifice of general cultural training, and they hold this condition largely responsible for the inflexible, reactionary spirit at the universities today. Therefore the Workmen's Educational Association is in no way to be a university on a lower basis, but it must establish a dignified position of its own, and even exert upon the academic institutions important new influences. It wants to put its students into touch with the spiritual riches of humanity, to sharpen their power of observation and their sense of fact, and on this basis to develop logical thinking and a sane understanding of human interrelationships.

## V

To attain these objects the following grouping of courses has been outlined. Since the first step must be to develop a sense of fact and an ability to make the correct deductions inherent in facts, the studies in mathematics and natural sciences are encouraged first. Here the facts and processes are simple, and simple laws are logically deduced. Also simple problems can be manipulated, the penetration of which is important for a rational view of life. Twenty-eight per cent of all the courses belong to this group. In the study of science practically all the emphasis is put upon principles. In the few courses (about



five per cent) dealing with applied science only those scientific accomplishments are studied which have decisively influenced spiritual culture or the structure of human society, or which through the manner of their application have become works of art.

The study of literature, music, and graphic and plastic art is placed next in importance. In these subjects the object is to learn to know the nature of artistic expression and its relation to life. This is sought not through informative historical study but through intimate associations with a few great works of art. For example, a class will devote a whole quarter to the study of *Hamlet*: first the play will be read to them by an eminent actor, then a detailed study will be made the basis for class discussions, which will incidentally uncover fundamental questions of artistic expression. In the study of music, small orchestras are called in to assist, and much of the study of the other arts is carried on in the city museums. This group comprises twenty-two per cent of the curriculum.

All the work is directed toward the development of a true social structure in which the thoughts and acts of each individual are led by the conviction that he is serving the best interests of society, and that he is conscious of his responsibility to it. The class must gain an insight into the development of the ideas of right and law, and of the principles of state and society. It must investigate how various social conditions have arisen, whether they are a necessary development, and how in the future they can be influenced in the interests of society. This is, of course, the study of history, geography, social science, and economics. Much attention is paid to the development of democracies, especially to the recent history of Russia and of Germany. Much time is given to investigating the historical roots of the new institutions inaugurated or proposed by the new German government, on the principle that the worker should make a close examination of those spiritual movements that seek to change economic and social conditions for the alleged benefit of society as a whole. To be sure, the country is still in the midst of the revolution

and there is a consequent strong consciousness of social shift among the workers, so that much interest is centered about the study of the principles of democracy and socialism. The emphasis on the study of Marxism is a little out of proportion in an otherwise carefully balanced liberal program. But this is a subject constantly forced upon these men outside the classes; within the classes it seems to be treated dispassionately and in a thoroughly scholarly way, and may help to give these students the balance of liberality so much needed in Germany's present confusion of passions. Thirty-three per cent of the courses belong to this larger group.

The crowning efforts are meant to come in intensive studies in philosophy and the science of religion. In these studies the class seeks the cultural standards peculiar to peoples or to whole epochs, the intimate knowledge of which should help each man to build the bridge which puts his own personality into relation with the rest of the world. Here, too, the purely historical study is avoided. First, introductory courses are offered to present the character and problems of philosophy, and then separate philosophical problems and separate philosophical systems are studied intensively.

Finally, a few courses in pedagogy are presented which are meant to test the methods of the Association. These consist mainly in lectures on universal education, on reforms such as the "ground schools," or on the work of the Workmen's Educational Association itself. The general plan is to arrange the courses so that any one subject, in so far as it is adaptable to the work of the Workmen's Educational Association, may be exhausted in two or, at most, three years. Three types of courses are offered in each of the groups: first, introductory courses which consist largely of lectures intended to give an idea of the scope and purpose and method of later courses; then the intermediate courses which are to supply the material for the final work; finally, the "*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*," or spiritual workshop itself. In the introductory courses the numbers are large, and the lecturer predominates, but persistent attempts are made to encourage discussion after each

talk. In the more advanced work the numbers are carefully limited. The intermediate courses seek to have the student acquaint himself with the material of his branch of study and search for the best method of employing that material. Lecturing is therefore discouraged, and all the work is done by means of discussions, still directed, however, by the teacher. In the workshop the aim is to approach more and more the point where teacher and student realize that they are searching in common. Here the attitude of the student, both in his observations and in his conclusions, provided only that the conclusions be logical, should be one of strict independence maintained in an atmosphere of honest intellectual rivalry and sincere companionship. Teacher and students should form an intimate commonalty of workers.

## VI

It is the duty of the business manager to keep himself continuously informed as to how far the organization is fulfilling the purpose of uniting the brain worker and hand worker in common efforts. He keeps in constant touch with the classes by arranging numerous conferences with committees from the classes to discuss the aims with the students and to hear suggestions from them. A meeting of all the classes and teachers within one of the city communities is held from time to time, in which an effort is made to get faculty and students freely to exchange views. Occasionally the entire organization of the whole of Greater Berlin meets in convention for similar discussion. I was not privileged to attend such a convention, but Professor Merz is said to have conducted several with interesting results. The business manager also edits a general magazine to which both faculty and students freely contribute discussions on the work of the classes or on the general cultural problems disclosed to them through their work. Perhaps it is simply the new broom, but in the few numbers that have appeared thus far the student contributions are of unusual strength.

The success of the undertaking depends most, however, upon the ability of the business manager to build up a body of teachers fitted for the work. I have attended meetings of the present faculty, and it was impressive to see how thoroughly they had absorbed the enthusiasm and the strong convictions of their leader. At these meetings the aims and the methods of teaching were reviewed, reports of experiences or observations on the work were made, and general discussions carried on which were very lively but were kept strictly to the subject under discussion by the chairman. Professor Merz also calls frequent group meetings of the faculty, to which he usually invites experts in that particular field from outside the organization, as well as those men whom he hopes to attach to the faculty. These smaller meetings are used wholly to review the method and standard of the work, with a view to keeping it on the desired level and within the purpose of the Association.

The Association has existed only since the fall of 1919. At the end of the first year a faculty of 118 members were conducting 125 classes in the ten communities of Greater Berlin. All the teachers were doing this work in addition to their regular occupation. They received a compensation of only fifty marks, less than one dollar, an evening. As the Association gains in permanency it will, of course, have to have its own faculty. This must practically be created for the purpose, principally from men of younger blood who are able to adopt and perfect the new methods demanded by the new situation. Above all, they must be men of strong individuality and deeply conscious of their duty to society. They must not be demagogues, but sound investigators sanely interested in the education of the people. It will matter little to the Association whether such men have been teachers by profession or not, but it will be of immense benefit to the universities if a goodly number from their faculty will aid in such work and thus bring the old system into contact with the new.

The classes of the Association presuppose the regular elementary education of the German *Volksschule*, corresponding

to the work of the proposed "ground schools." Partly to supply such preparation to those who have never had the opportunity to acquire it, but mainly to revive it for those who have long since forgotten, Professor Merz has built up a subsidiary organization which offers preparatory courses in arithmetic and language. The courses run for twelve weeks of two hours each, and are conducted by university students recommended by individual professors as especially fitted for work with the laboring classes. These students are the particular hobby of Professor Merz. From their numbers he hopes to recruit the future permanent faculty of the Workmen's Educational Association, and he therefore watches carefully to see which of the students best develop the spirit of coöperation and the power of sympathetic leadership necessary for the success of the venture.

In the larger organization most courses run in four quarters of eight evening meetings of an hour and a half each; some have two-hour meetings, and a very few meet only five evenings in a quarter. The fee paid by the students is figured at fifty pfennigs an hour, making only eight marks a quarter for the longest course. The fee in the preparatory work is only four marks a course. With the mark worth a little over one cent this is, of course, a merely nominal fee, meant only to express the initial interest of the worker in the opportunities offered. Most of the finances must come from the city communities. Because of the present unsound financial status of Germany, and because of the reactionary influences that are insidiously manipulating the present political confusion, the communities are not so liberal as the success of the undertaking warrants, and they are therefore imposing upon the business management the necessity of subtle economies. These are simplified, however, by the enthusiastic and unselfish support of the faculty. Meanwhile, the attendance is growing by such leaps and bounds that the spirit of the organization will slowly but surely permeate the communities whatever ephemeral phases they may pass through within the next few years. Then it will not only be possible to perfect the plans

of the founders of the institution by building up a permanent faculty and paying them properly for their work, but the enlightenment and sanity and strength developed within the many workers of the classes will surely lead the country in the direction of sound reconstruction and save it many of the mad experiments of ignorance. In one essential respect, at least, the workers in these classes have a distinct advantage over the rest of the country: they are serious, patient, calm, and willing to open their eyes.

## VII

No other city of Germany has developed a Workmen's Educational Association so strong as that of Greater Berlin. In Munich the bitter excesses of the two attempts at a communistic republic have created a distrust of all popular movements and put reaction in complete control. In Leipzig there is an organization for workmen's education which is imposing on paper, but actually is in the same hopeless confusion as all the public institutions of this most radical of the larger German cities. The Leipzig worker has not yet learned that to see is better than to dream. The new universities of Frankfurt and Cologne and Hamburg show a marked interest in developing like movements but they all seem to lack an organizer of the power of Professor Merz. Each of these cities is accordingly wasting strength in numerous smaller ventures that are competing where they should combine. At the University of Münster an institute for the study of social science was established in the spring of 1920 for the express purpose of offering intensive training to labor leaders, or to students who hope to develop labor leadership into a sound profession. The founder and head of this institution, Professor Plenge, is a man who enjoys the highest respect in academic circles as in the important labor unions of Westphalia. He is working with unusual success in a section where animosities between labor and capital are greatest.

### III

## YOUTH IN REVOLT

### I

**I**N MY search through Germany for those who had the power to clear away some of the confusion that lay upon the country and to find some basic force in which the people had faith and which could serve as the foundation of new standards, I repeatedly met with the assertion that the best men of this type had gone into seclusion to keep away from the ever more confounding political squabbles and economic passions of the day. One of the very best of these men, I was often told, was a former professor of philosophy of the University of Heidelberg, who had been driven from office at the outbreak of the war and had retired to a secluded spot near Munich. He had published only a single drama and a few short articles since then, but his influence among those who knew him was so strong and seemingly so inspiring that I determined to look him up as soon as I came to Munich. He lived out in Percha, a little village near the Starnberger Lake, in a small villa furnished in simple old furniture and secluded in an estate of old high trees, with rugged walks along a winding brook: a most romantic setting for the radical I had expected to find. The man himself was a tall, well-set-up, athletic figure of middle age, with powerful but pleasant voice, long curly hair and kind blue eyes. Instead of a modern radical, he appeared to be a last remnant of the old idealistic German students of the type of Karl Schurz, who had led the unsuccessful revolution of 1848. In his attitude, his views

and hopes, he proved to be just that: "the last *Burschenschafter*," as one of his friends later described him to me.

His idealism had made him a pessimist as to the present conditions of Germany, but the kind of pessimist who really suffers for lack of being able to fix his faith upon some definite and radical reserve of health within his people. The times had almost got his nerve, I thought. His one great concern was to keep alive the essential resource by which he lived: the ability to make a sharp distinction between appearances assumed by things, especially in a crisis, and what those things really and inwardly are. "Today," he said, "all public expressions are merely front, and if any of the nation's seers claims he has any faith, he lies. He can only hope that, by some miracle or other, things may so clear that he can see and create again. At present there is nothing genuine. The best the poets can do is to fight hard to maintain that which is real and true about things as they were; but even for that they had best retire. Otherwise they will be contaminated by recent movements, none of which is free from the black plague of materialism, — a materialism that increasingly demanded its toll from the whole of German life, brought on the war and the defeat, and finally the present confusion."

To him the war was a hopeless one from the beginning, because the materialism that waged it was already on the verge of bankruptcy. Naturalism, the artistic expression of materialism, together with its descendants, impressionism and cubism, was already at the point of death. In the footsteps of Maeterlink and Verhaeren a new spirituality was beginning to appear; though it too had its cults and cants, it did lead men away from sham and inspired them to pry into the real nature of a thing before they followed it. When war came, the men of this new movement supported it enthusiastically, not because they believed in those who were carrying it on, but because they thought it would create a crisis in which men would be what they are, that thus the last remains of materialism would be forever killed. But war did the very opposite. Man got to be neither spiritual nor beastlike, but



merely a machine. So that the new movement was rudely shaken, and now it is necessary not only to begin anew, but to remove from it a most disturbing confusion. Meanwhile the great mass is deluding itself with cant of various sorts.

He then spoke of one movement which before the war had best embodied the new spirit and which, he said, may rise again and carry it on: a movement by the youth of Germany in revolt against their teachers and parents, who were forcing them to deny their personal ambitions, instincts, and ideas in favor of the demands of the state. I had often before heard mention of this movement, and of its unique power and influence on German secondary education and the workings of the young German mind. Upon examining it I found that it had almost swept the famous German system off its feet.

## II

The movement started in 1898 in Steglitz, a rather dignified suburb of Berlin on the road to Potsdam. Steglitz had an efficient and proud Prussian population glorying in its stern loyalty to the demands which the rising state was pleased to make, and fostering an awed regard for Potsdam traditions. Its schools, especially its classical gymnasia, were of the most approved standards. Two ideals governed them in the education of their youth: the ideal of scholarship based upon Greek culture, and the ideal of service to the state. But the first was strictly subordinated to the second. The state was a jealous god who demanded love and reverence and pious subordination and fear. As in all German schools, but especially in the classical gymnasia, there was close contact with the church. The teachers were all more or less willing assistants to the priests: not only did they open the session with prayer, but they were obliged at every opportunity to harmonize the mandates of the stern North German protestantism with the obligations due to the state. Duty ruled every phase of life within the school, until the scholar had completely surrendered his individuality to it and had thus become a model pupil

and the joy and pride of his parents. Whatever interfered with this duty, this stern categorical imperative in which the universal law was the state guarded on one side by the church and on the other by scholarship, was suppressed with much painstaking severity and pious zeal by overzealous servants and with much ruthless cruelty by ambitious climbers. The personality of the young German boys was ground down sometimes into very delicate, sometimes merely into cruder parts of the great automaton. In the small studies of their homes, alone or with a few kindred spirits, these little chaps would often turn into enthusiastic rebels and feed voraciously on the ideas of some radical modern philosopher or the visions of some rebellious poet. But even among themselves there would hardly be mention of political action, and once back in the school they immediately became again the awed and docile pupils. The system's school had so easy a success with this education that it lived in smug security and was quite unprepared when chance circumstances aroused the stifled romanticism in the youth of Steglitz and fired it to revolt.

Steglitz was a center in which the system felt comfortably secure. It had a loyal, sturdy, prosperous, middle class population. Its schools were of the very best with highly efficient faculties. In Steglitz lived the aged philosopher and so-called liberal, Frederick Paulsen, an old, kind-hearted, typically north German fighter, and a puritanical, evangelical scholastic. Philosophy and theology were one to him; with sincere conviction he put them both at the service of the state. His ideas of school reform were the proud garment in which the system hid in Steglitz. He was the kind of servant whom the system valued most, because he lent himself so well to use and abuse without a vestige of suspicion. But because the system felt so safe, it brought stronger men into the faculty, and among them caught a personality who insisted on the right of personal views. Gurlitt despised those of his colleagues who had surrendered unconditionally to the system; he considered them shallow or dangerously insincere. Moreover, he did not believe in the eternal sanctity of a fixed set of standards and he

frankly aired his point of view before his class. "His teaching was an undermining of sacred heritages; he put into the heads of the youth ideas which robbed them of their peace and upset them; he taught them to look upon the world from an angle which had never been taught them before, which had been carefully kept from them, a point of view which led them from the proper path and threw many a one heedlessly from a carefully chosen career out on to the path of independent thinking. He spoke of things that were taboo."<sup>1</sup> Gurlitt seemingly was an excellent though dangerous teacher. The system would have got rid of him if he had been merely a local official, but he was uncomfortably well known for his writings and therefore, according to the methods of the system, had to be treated cannily. He had to submit to a great deal of chicanery by patriotic colleagues. At an official inspection it was finally determined that he was not sufficiently master of his subject to be a worthy teacher. The school quietly accepted a good number of his reforms after he had been dismissed and danger no longer threatened timid souls, but the pupils had been seized by a new spirit which presented a far more radical danger to the system.

The quarrels of their teachers had been strongly sensed and keenly followed by the boys. It made them alert and sharpened the dull rebellious spirit they had timidly nourished in their private studies. "If teachers fight as to standards where they have seemed so certain, then all things may be uncertain and we who are young have the most reason to investigate." Because they had been subdued so long, they set out upon this search with all the excess of their newly discovered revolutionary romanticism. Above all, they felt, the search must be their own and not in any way directed or interpreted by their teachers or even by their parents. Indeed, suspicion of their parents was even deeper in these rebellious lads than suspicion of their teachers. After all, the teachers were merely carrying on their jobs, and their fine talk of ideals was merely

<sup>1</sup> Hans Bluecher, *Wandervogel*, Charlottenburg, 1919, p. 35. I have freely taken details from this most popular but curiously biased history.

part of the required equipment; there was no pretense of the intimacy of the home. What makes the revolt so interesting a picture is that it gave the lads their first real taste of youth with all youth's craving for romantic life.

## III

There never was a system that set out more ruthlessly to throttle the basic impulses of youth than did the German gymnasium of the last few decades, where the classical ideal, the religious ideal, even the ideal of scholarship, were carefully prepared to make the young man into an efficient instrument of the state. All free movement was carefully controlled so as to prepare for this main purpose. "The school had to exert every ounce of its powers so to train the intellect of youth from the start that at a certain stage of its maturity it could not help thinking according to the wishes of the state and acknowledging a high degree of probability to the ideals which were preached in school."<sup>2</sup> This process was so persistent and so carefully clothed in almost all the high and accepted ideals of the age, that only a few escaped and these few only after loneliness, pangs of conscience, and persecution by their friends. In Steglitz, however, conditions were ripe for a most natural reaction to overstressed order; and so it happened that the German youth burst forth there in the greatest of their spontaneous mass movements to free themselves from artificial bonds, an outburst of repressed inherent romanticism. At bottom was a deep spirit of revolt, and among a few consciousness of revolt, against the system and its professional teachers and most of all against the parents, who upheld system and teachers instead of being their sons' friends. Where such consciousness was strong it sometimes violently snapped accustomed bonds and created a cynical and nihilistic attitude toward all culture, but there was sometimes a sane reserve. In the early days of the movement one boy writes to another: "You write that love for our parents

<sup>2</sup> *Wandervogel*, p. 75.

is a phrase that we have outgrown. Don't you believe it! Out of love for us only do our parents take these steps that bring us to despair. The tragedy of it is, that they do not understand us and have quite a wrong conception of the character of our inclinations. But it is terrible that we must show them gratitude for that which makes us so unhappy. That really worries me."<sup>3</sup>

The leader of the movement was not a reckless spirit simply seeking a chance to lead his fellows on mad escapades in order to sow wild oats without restraint. He was rather a romantic rebel of the type of Karl Moor, the hero of every German sentimental youth whose passion is to be himself, who is conscious of ideals which he thinks better than those which society imposes, and who devotes his life to winning respect for them in the face of social opposition. On Sundays the leader would take his friends out on an all-day hike, and at night they would lie about a camp fire on the open heath, airing their grievances and talking of things that were taboo at school; and Karl Fischer, or "Crazy Fischer," as the boys called him, would try to inspire them with his ideals. He was none too clear, it seems, about these ideals, and therefore could not give a very definite direction to the movement at the start. But he was very serious and very much respected by the friends he gathered about him. While he was a romanticist with a strong passion for freedom to be himself, he insisted, like Karl Moor, on the severest self-discipline. He was a passionate nationalist, because the foreign was unreal to him and he feared to come under its influence. He loved to revive old Germanic customs. As the most solemn celebrations of his organization, he reinstituted old Germanic rites around high bonfires on the nights of the summer and the winter solstices. While he was willing to discard the accustomed ideals of home and church and militaristic state, he insisted that the new ones must be found by fighting for self-possession against the inward tendency toward excesses and passions. Therefore, though these young lads were in revolt against their elders, they still commanded not a little respect.

<sup>3</sup> *Wandervogel*, p. 81.

## IV

At the very outset Karl Fischer was intent not upon a local club but upon a large national organization, independent of the school and founded and maintained by youth. Although the school forbade all such societies, Fischer managed to discover a way out of this difficulty. He found a number of parents in Steglitz who believed in his sincerity and trusted his intentions. They formed a "Committee for Scholars," as they called it, which functioned as the official organization but did nothing except protect the boys against interference and supply funds when necessary. The boys enrolled their names with this committee in a so-called *Scholarenbuch* which became famous as the real record of the movement. They called themselves *Wandervogel*, birds of passage, for their most distinctive mark was simply that they wished to get away, when possible, and wander out into the open heath or the hills and forests, so as to be by themselves. The first long hike was conducted by Karl Fischer in the spring of 1898 into the Bohemian forests, Karl Moor's favorite haunt. Later, as the movement spread rapidly over Germany and Austria and into Switzerland, short tramps were arranged for every week-end throughout most of the year. For the school vacations long hikes were organized that took the boys through Germany and into those parts of foreign countries, preferably into Russia, where German settlers abounded. The *Wandervogel* is described as "a brown, dirty fellow with a soft felt hat, somewhere a few green, red and gold ribbons, on his back a rucksack and over his shoulder a sooty pot and a guitar." They scorned hotels and mocked at the rain and generally gloried in their health and freedom. They delighted in their similarity to the Traveling Scholar of the Middle Ages, studied his habits and his language and even imitated his dialectics. There was no tendency, however, to imitate the habits of drinking and duelling of the modern German university student, though in the early days the members did at times

enter an inn and mildly carouse for an evening. Mostly they sat about the fires with groups of boys from some distant locality whom they had joined on the march, and discussed conditions of home and school; finding that everywhere the same situation prevailed and the same need of change.

On their hikes they met and fraternized with tramps, letting the magic of tramp slang play upon them and adopting much of it. They listened to their stories and their songs and made a record of many of them, especially of their epics. At first, as they marched about, and at their fires in the evening, they sang the songs of the Revolution of 1848 and some of the rebellious German student songs, but as they came into contact with the simple folk in the hills and forests of Germany and on the marshy heaths, they discovered a new store of folk songs which they eagerly snatched up and set to music for the guitar, the magic of which instrument, they claim, had been long lost in Germany and was rediscovered by them. These folk songs one of their leaders, Hans Breuer, collected and published under the title of *Zupfgeigenhansl* (Pick-fiddle John). It represents a real contribution to German popular song, and is, according to the statements of experts, the best collection that ever has been made.

## v

So these young rebels grew into a healthy lot, who reveled in nature and let it sharpen their senses and cleanse their appetites, who taught each other the loyalty of friendship and in a most natural way strengthened national consciousness. But whatever these benefits they were still rebels, and were slipping more and more from the control of their teachers. The school, true to the character of the system, did not dare proceed openly against the organization, though the more conscientious a teacher was in his institutional duty toward youth the more he felt himself obliged to stamp it out in spite of all the good it was producing. The teachers engaged in petty jealous chicanery. The leaders in the *Wandervogel* called

themselves *Bachants* from the title of the leaders of the old Traveling Scholars, derived from *vagans* or *vagus* and having no connection with a possible worship of Bacchus. But the zealous philologists on the faculty were studiously careless in examining the title, read it *Bacchants*, and raised a cry of intemperance against the boys. A fourteen-year-old boy, writing a composition on his vacation days, gave an enthusiastic description of a hike, in the course of which he said, "We caroused until four in the morning." The teacher at once made a case of discipline of it. The examination of the boy proved the composition a mere piece of imagination, still the teacher drew a fat red line under the remark and inserted the exclamation: "Lie!" The poor chap was disciplined and forbidden to take part in further excursions. The incident also served as an excuse for passing a rule that henceforth overnight excursions should be forbidden to boys under sixteen. These methods, however, only knit the boys closer together and brought to light more clearly the essential health and cleanness of the movement. Therefore the system was forced to proceed "cleverly." The teachers set out to praise the movement extravagantly and to patronize it. They clothed it with their own regular patriotic motives and attempted to send into its rank those upon whom they could depend to make it harmless. Then they solicited invitations from the boys to join their hikes. They hoped that, once participating, their standing would quickly put them into a position of command, and that they would soon win the boys back to the authority of the school. At first the boys were on their guard against such interference, but when the movement grew to large proportions and its organization became more complex, dissensions occurred within the ranks. The teachers with their authority then had a better chance to interfere, and they very nearly killed the spirit that had originally called the movement into being.

As long as Karl Fischer, the founder and romantic idealist, could watch over the movement and keep its idealism and romanticism fresh, it ran little risk of successful interference



by the pedagogues. Fischer was an absolute monarch in his way and tolerated no opposition. As the movement grew he tried to hold fast to his authority by assuming ever higher sounding titles. But by the time he was about to exchange the gymnasium for the university, his organization was overdeveloped and factions were splitting off. A reaction set in against his authority and against the extreme primitiveness of his romantic ideals. The richer boys wanted to enjoy expressions of their freedom in more refined ways. Instead of hikes they organized wagon and automobile tours through Germany with elaborate hotel accommodations. Of course, they lost their spirit of revolt, and with it the appeal to youthful romanticism. At once the teachers protected this new faction; soon they were in control of it and were able to make larger and larger inroads upon Fischer's following. Fischer put up one last fight when he saw his followers dwindling. He called his friends out into the heath to the old camping ground. There they met at night about a huge fire and looked their situation in the face and decided to stand up against it. They renewed their oaths of allegiance to each other and went back confident of victory, took up the fight, and not long after were again in command. Because of the protection that the "rational factions" enjoyed, they were freer than ever from authority, except for that of Fischer.

But when Fischer went to the university, he had to leave the direction to others. Because the *Wandervogel* was now a large organization it systematized itself and sought more help from teachers and was soon split again into various factions. When Fischer angrily interfered he was tried by a "court of honor," composed largely of elders, and ousted.

## VI

On the Rhine lived an elderly gentleman named Jansen, who had a passion for youth and was fascinated by the spirit of the *Wandervogel*. He, too, disliked the system and believed he could help his nation by clarifying this revolt. He con-

tributed liberally of his wealth, spread *Wandervogel* propaganda throughout the country, and helped to organize many branches throughout South and West Germany. But Jansen, being older, was more a free thinker than a primitive romanticist. He undertook to free the movement of false ideals and to introduce a more rational outlook. In doing so, he created new discords and introduced subtle differentiations that only gave the school a better chance to get control.

Finally a friend of Fischer's, Hans Breuer, undertook to revive the original spirit of the *Wandervogel* and created the *Wandervogel, Deutscher Bund*, from those who were in sympathy with him throughout the factions. He revived the traditions of the Traveling Scholar, and with the guitar conducted the remarkably successful search for hidden German folklore. His love for nature made him an enemy of alcohol, and he urged abstinence upon the members of the *Bund*. The interest in nature of these "unbacchanalian Bachants" is said to have been very keen, and on their jolly hikes their interest in folklore grew and took the place of the traditional student songs. The *Zupfgeigenhansl* is their lasting contribution to German culture. These boys commanded respect wherever they went.

Again the system saw its chance, and teachers and elders insinuated themselves. On the basis of the clean morals of the boys they started a movement among them to pledge themselves to total abstinence and consistent democracy in their social organization. They systematized and spoiled and caused dissension. Because the boys were clean they persuaded them to allow girls to join their ranks. While that was successful for a time, a constant emphasis on the delightful simplicity of such companionship forced a distorted consciousness of the relation of sex upon the youth, and made that relation artificial. They managed to induce the *Bund* to accept into its ranks the boys of lower schools, and thus brought in a new element which could not easily be absorbed. When the movement was thus weakened, the teachers took control, so that they were soon in command of every phase

of the original revolt. "Ten years had passed. The *Wandervogel* movement had its beginning in a revolt against the pedagogues and parents in order to go its own ways. An enmity had broken out between youth and old age. In this enmity youth had developed, had built up a rich culture, and had found many a thing that had formerly been kept from it. Now it set about finding a reconciliation, — and inevitably it had to sink."

## VII

When the movement was sufficiently weakened, the school no longer hid its purpose. It arbitrarily put in teachers as leaders everywhere. If it met with opposition it adopted stern disciplinary measures. Just before the war many a youngster had to suffer under its persecution. The state also had its say. It set about to change the enthusiasm for German national character back into systematic loyalty to the state, and the desire for outdoor life into a system of military drill. The *Wandervogel* was to be the backbone of the German Boy Scouts or "Young Guard," as the War Office called it. When this last move was made, many of the youngsters threatened a new revolt. In the summer of 1914, however, General von der Goltz, holding a grand review of the Young Guard at Heidelberg, fired them to such a patriotic heat that they publicly denounced their former ideals and openly broke with those who still insisted on them. It was for championing this denounced minority that the Professor of Philosophy, who first told me this story, lost his position at the university.

It is well worth noting, however, that the spirit of revolt, and a strong consciousness of the artificiality of the system, was extremely active in Germany before defeat brought the system into disrepute. To this spirit many a man is now pinning his faith, and is anxiously looking for the time when it will appear again as strong and healthy as it appeared in these boys in the days before the war. There are only a very few of these boys left. When the war broke out, they saw in it the hour when men would throw off artificiality and

become themselves; or else they saw their country in distress and had no time or patience to analyze the system's responsibility in bringing war about. What fiery romantic youth would have done otherwise? They were among the first and the most reckless in battle, and the system, of course, did not have the interest nor yet the wisdom to spare them. So today they are gone or broken, but faith in their spirit still remains, and this spirit may yet become active and take a strong part in leading the country out of its confusion.

## IV

### THE PEOPLE OF BERLIN AND THEIR THEATRE

#### I

**I**F THE Prussian state of mind, in its present confusion and its efforts to find a way out, can be read in any one institution, it is in the attitude of the people of Berlin to their theatre. They feel that in every practical activity, as well as in their rather helplessly childish but laborious attempts at political reorganization, they are not masters of themselves but subject to the endless obligations which defeat has heaped upon them. Even though they are at work as busily as any nation is today, they go about their work with the staggering dullness which comes from a growing realization of defeat. Work is both a panacea and an opiate to them, but does not as yet express consciousness of accomplishment. In the theatre, however, they are free: free to exhibit the heavy scum of passions which the war produced, and the distorted growth of recent decades which the war has brought to light; but free also to express whatever attempts at clarifying are going on beneath, attempts which are being watched longingly by an ardent minority. In the theatre, they claim, they are trying to find means of expressing themselves as they now are; there, they say, they are allowed to be themselves, and can still put into symbols and symbolic action the forces by which they hope to carry on.

Both in theory and by long tradition the theatre in Germany is quite a different institution from the theatre in America or in England. It is essentially neither a commercial undertaking nor a place of entertainment, but a national forum for

self-expression. It still shows clearly that its real beginnings lie not so much in the attempts of the church of the Middle Ages to bring its miracles vividly before the people, or in popular pageantry, but rather in the pulpit of the Protestant reformer, in protesting German philosophy, and in humanistic idealism. The history of the German theatre is not the story of the increasing success of playwright, manager and actor in discovering the temper of the audience and humoring it, of "putting a play across" in Broadway style and making large fortunes. That has been done in Germany, of course, as long as there has been a theatre. But plays of this nature are not allowed to appear in the subsidized public theatres or even in those private theatres whose managers profess artistic standards. They have large tinsel houses of their own that make their appeal frankly to those who seek mere entertainment. These theatres are often very prosperous while the others must depend on subsidies, but they do not command popular respect and their plays are soon forgotten. Throughout the German people there is unusual differentiation between a show and a drama. The drama must produce characters and the characters must be representative of the life the nation is leading or would like to lead. It must express the basic forces of the nation, its essential common standards, in characters that will reveal the people to themselves. So the people sit reverent and puzzled, often, before the drama and, in an attitude of expectation, let its visions play upon them. Most of the dramas that the German people now call great were but little suited to the stage on which they first appeared, and were full of unaccustomed vision to the audience; but because they gradually and forcibly disclosed the people to themselves they were accepted as great national possessions.

The theatres at which these dramas appear do not advertise in newspapers excepting for a brief announcement. Dramatic critics, therefore, are not press agents in any sense but serious students of the drama who jealously watch over its function. The greater freedom of the press, resulting from the revolution,

has made them even more exacting than in the times when royal patronage had still to be in some measure considered; though it is expressive of the part that the drama plays among the people, that in no phase of public life has arbitrary royal interference been less successful than in dramatic criticism. Even the sneering displeasure of the Crown Prince at the first performance of Hauptmann's anti-militaristic Festival Play in 1913, which was to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Napoleon's fall, succeeded in influencing hardly a single one of the better critics of the day.

## II

The theatre, therefore, assumes a rôle of first importance in the struggle of the people for a new direction to their existence, and all the forces of this struggle come together and clash furiously on the stages of Berlin. The fury of this struggle results from the impact of four principal forces: the old theatres of the crown that have been turned over to the state and are expected to be the great popular forum for the expressions of the new democracy; the great Berlin Drama League that has sprung spontaneously from the so-called lower classes as an expression of themselves; the theatres of Reinhardt, who claims to be able to unite a commercial venture with the ideal of preserving for the people the best of their dramatic expressions; and finally the more or less frankly commercial ventures that measure the desires of the people merely by box-office receipts.

The last class naturally comprises the largest number of theatres, especially as the picture plays must be included. The latter are drawing tremendous crowds in Berlin today as they are everywhere. Because of the large salaries it can afford to pay, the moving picture industry is drawing upon some of the very best and most convincingly artistic actors of the country and on the foremost scenic artists. But the very best efforts of the artist are turned into sensational effects by money-mad managers, who, by the promise of a new

refinement in excitement, lure the crowds to stupefying entertainment.

The other entertainment theatres are an equally sorry sight. Here all the degrading influences of war and defeat, of profiteering and senseless passions, are exploited. The reviews are crude, splashy, and poorly played imitations of London music halls, mixed with awkward attempts at French suggestiveness; the comedies are disgustingly sensuous and extravagant, and the more serious shows play to the cheapest war-time passions and prejudices of the audience. Excepting for the motion picture houses, however, all theatres of this class are exceedingly expensive, so that they attract only the very rich, or rather that large class of people who, by war-time speculations, have temporarily come into a large amount of spending money. That this is a passing crowd is as plain as it is fortunate, and, its money gone, its theatres will go with it. Today the number of these theatres is rather greater than before the war. Then Berlin could boast of several private theatres whose managers had the highest standards and, not being interfered with by suggestions from the court, often supported venturesome dramatists who were opening up important new paths for the drama. But the refined audience that supported such theatres has been financially ruined by the war, and the managers, in order to live, are forced to draw the crowds of profiteers and to pamper their dull nerves with large doses of strong stimulants. It is interesting to note that in the judgment of almost every reputable critic of Berlin the famous Sudermann is rated as belonging to this category. He maintains a theatre of his own, where every season a new play or two of his is produced before an audience that likes the carefully respectable way in which he excites its nerves, and which remains loyal to him, as an addict is loyal to his stimulant, in spite of the warnings, anger and ridicule of critics. The composition of the Sudermann audience seemed very different from that at any other theatre of the city. It appeared to be composed of that remnant of the upper middle class and of officialdom that has known how to escape the



financial ruin that the war brought to most of them. It has retained Sudermann to entertain it with drawing-room indecencies and comforting satires on the new order, which it hopes will soon pass over.

However numerous the class frequenting the theatres of this general type, it is an inactive class and one of stupid spirit: not at all expressive of what the public ultimately will demand. It is simply a symptom of the post-war disease. The attempts to stamp it out are indicative of what may ultimately be expected of Germany. All the remaining theatres, those of Reinhardt, of the state, and of the People's Drama League, are working with varying degrees of honesty and success at the process of self-expression.

### III

As far as I could judge from a personal interview with Reinhardt, he is absolutely convinced that his theatres are serving only the interests of the best drama and are devoted to enriching the literary tastes of the people. He is, clearly enough, a masterly genius of the stage, rather than of the drama; but in his ideals he is deeply sincere. By almost all dramatic critics of Berlin, however, and by a large proportion of the public seriously interested in the drama, Reinhardt is passionately hated as a man professing an ideal, but in practice seeking merely to please in order to enrich himself. In a large mass meeting of Berlin workers, for example, called to discuss the relation of the drama to the people, I heard every mention of Reinhardt, even when casually made, answered by an angry sneer from the crowd. Neither Reinhardt nor his critics are altogether right. As I will try to show, Reinhardt has got on a curiously wrong track and is reluctant to leave it. The passion of his critics is largely due to the extreme jealousy and pride with which they guard their ideals of the importance of the theatre in the scheme of national life.

Aside from a few commercial ventures such as the *Theater des Westens*, where reviews of comic operas are staged in the

new extravagant Berlin style, but in connection with which Reinhardt's name never appears, he controls three theatres: an experimental stage, called the *Kammerspiele*; the old, historic *Deutsches Theater*, which for forty years has been the pathfinder of the German drama; and his new immense circus theatre, the *Grosses Schauspielhaus*. The *Kammerspiele* is a small experimental stage of the highest order, where modern plays of all nations are tried out, or modernized studies of older plays are staged, by the best actors in Reinhardt's employ. It deserves much credit because of its broadening influences, but it is an exclusive club for connoisseurs, so to speak, small and very expensive. Because its influence upon the public is indirect only, it is not appreciated as it deserves. Moreover, much of the time of the very best of Reinhardt players, men like Moissi and Krauss, two of the most talented actors of the German stage, is occupied by the *Kammerspiele* so that they can appear only occasionally before the larger audiences, which strongly resent such treatment.

In Reinhardt's two remaining theatres the prices are popular, and a repertory is selected with the avowed intention of giving the people the best drama in the best possible setting. It is intensely interesting to observe that popular opposition to Reinhardt sets in at this very point. When democratic Germany shook off the influence of the princes from the many court theatres, it wanted no substitute for their authority. Because Reinhardt presumes to educate them from above, they resent his attitude and mistrust his acts. If he had strongly persisted in his attitude, he might have convinced the people, but, instead of that, he made apparent concessions in organization and tried to flatter their whims in the production of his plays. In both respects he is tragically in the wrong. Through the attempts to please the audience the artistic quality of the *Deutsches Theater*, even, has seriously suffered. With each new play produced the effects become more striking and sensational. Thereby his intentions become more obvious to the audience, and its anger turns into mockery and scoffing.

The *Grosses Schauspielhaus* is an old circus, skillfully transformed into an immense theatre seating over three thousand people in a semicircle about a gigantic stage. This consists first of a large but somewhat shallow picture-frame stage of the ordinary sort, in front of which a spacious oblong platform extends out into the auditorium. Below this second stage runs a wide, deep pit beneath the level of the front seats. It is not at all a stage as we know it, but a tremendous forum. With the Greek drama Reinhardt has achieved remarkable effects upon this stage, but it is an impossible arrangement for a modern drama that does not depend upon spectacular crowds for its effect. When the crowds are not in the pit of the stage, the actors must so strain their voices to carry across the expanse between themselves and the audience that that struggle occupies the attention of the audience to the exclusion of the drama. When the crowds fill the pit their effect becomes so spectacular that again the real dramatic effect is lost. I saw an excellent performance there of Romain Rolland's *Danton*; excellent, in that each separate part was admirably interpreted by very able actors; but *Danton's* roars would not let you forget that you were sitting in a former circus, and in the last act the trial of *Danton* before the revolutionary tribunal and in the presence of the turbulent crowds of Paris was so magnificently exciting that Rolland's part in the creation was entirely lost. One feels that Reinhardt has grown jealous of the popularity of the startling effects of the screen and has determined to compete by offering large cinematograph effects upon this stage. The theatre very clearly is a failure, however honest Reinhardt's intention may be. But it is a costly undertaking and one he is therefore reluctant to abandon. To maintain it, however, his plays are becoming more and more spectacular and less and less artistic. Reinhardt's unusual genius may find a way out. He claims that the problem is complicated and fascinating and that he has not yet been able to discover the real possibilities of this stage. Meanwhile the opposition is growing from day to day. The distrust of him may soon be so deeply rooted that

no solution will be able to convince. In order to attract an audience he will then be wholly dependent upon sensational effects.

In the summer of 1920 Reinhardt startled the theatre world of Germany by announcing that he had retired from all of his Berlin theatres in favor of his friend Max Hollaender. After the first shock the Berlin critics simply discounted this statement. Hollaender, who is a shrewd manager, they considered simply a dummy; and they believed that Reinhardt was trying to escape the increasing storm of criticism to be free, the better to carry on a difficult fight he was waging with the state authorities over the heavy amusement tax. As a matter of fact, Reinhardt's activity at his Berlin theatres has decreased but little. He is devoting much time to an important venture in Austria, and in the late fall of 1920 he made an elaborate tour with a picked ensemble through the theatres of Scandinavia; but he is also putting in a good deal of hard work at his old theatres, much as before.

Just before he publicly announced his retirement, but when the rumor of it was already widespread, I had an opportunity to question him in his summer castle in Salzburg, Austria. There he outlined his attitude toward his Berlin activities in idealistic terms, but clearly showed the strain he was laboring under because of the criticisms resulting from the direction in which his circus theatre was forcing him. "The Berlin theatres, once the leading field for the development of the stage and the best drama," he said, "are seriously in danger of decay. The Prussian passion for work and efficiency, powerful enough before the war, is only heightened by the necessities imposed upon the country by defeat. People of Berlin no longer have leisure to enjoy art as it must be enjoyed. They go to the theatre as tired business men do, with ragged nerves, and demanding excitement and sensation. Meanwhile the moving picture industry is drawing the actors away from the best theatres. The star system is again forcing out the repertory program. To produce the best plays you must have a company of first-rate actors, so that every part is taken

by an artist, and you must keep them fresh by a repertory program which demands much devotion and understanding of the drama, as well as much time. The high salaries in the motion picture industry, especially attractive now that living is so high, have seriously impaired the devotion to art. When first-rate actors are asked to play secondary parts, they prefer the large salaries of the motion picture manager and thus spoil the chances for an artistic ensemble. Then, too, the state finds it necessary to levy a tax as high as thirty per cent on all box-office receipts instead of coming to the help of the theatre as it did once. This makes for very high admission fees and consequently a greater dependence of the director upon the whims of the audience. As a result the Berlin theatre is rapidly undergoing a change. The repertory program has already disappeared from a number of the best theatres and some annual hit is being featured in Broadway style."

Reinhardt believes that good plays simply cannot be given in artistic fashion on the star plan. It certainly is a fact that the high standard of the German stage was achieved only after the star system had made way in favor of the repertory theatre. It is equally true that wherever the star system is introduced today, crude and sensational entertainment takes the place of the old artistic repertory. Reinhardt professes that he has retired to avoid devoting himself to that sort of thing, though the change makes it possible for the theatres to continue, and to hold their good actors because they are not required to attend rehearsals after the season's play is once well started, and consequently have considerable spare time to sell to the motion pictures. In Berlin, Reinhardt thinks only the large people's playhouses like the circus theatre will be able to maintain the old artistic program. The tremendous size of such a house makes it possible to sell admission at a low price, to get an unsophisticated audience receptive to ideal effects, and thus give the actor and director a proper atmosphere in which to work. The large receipts also enable the payment of good salaries to the actors.

However, as already indicated, Reinhardt is not acting boldly

in accordance with his expressed conviction, but is allowing himself to be drawn into an endless system of compromises. Even the "People's Theatre," as he delights to call his *Grosses Schauspielhaus*, is becoming more and more a spectacle, rather than a stage upon which the nation's best dramas are interpreted for the people. So Reinhardt has lost caste today. But this is simply because in the national misery the ideals to which he was perhaps honestly aspiring have been neglected in favor of his practical activity as a producer. Reinhardt is an actor and an unusually ingenious manipulator of stage effects. Of the stern ideals of the German drama, and of its intimate relation to the inner life of the people, he has been an ardent student, but is not a naturally endowed interpreter. A growing consciousness of this accounts, no doubt, for the popular spirit of mistrust in which he is being shunned by those who are searching the visions of their poets to help clear away their own confusion.

## IV

When, with the revolution, the state assumed control of the old court theatres of Berlin, it concentrated all its efforts at reform upon the theatre devoted to the spoken drama. In those early days of the revolution the state officials were not only extremely radical, but were amusing themselves and frantically seeking popular favor by proposing immediate realization of utopian theories for popularizing the institutions of art. The theatre employees, both high and low, organized a sort of soviet of their own. Yet the changes actually effected were unusually sober and rational. There seems to be no doubt that the almost reverent attitude of Germans toward the drama acted as a powerful check upon over-hasty operations, although it must be admitted that some of the utopian proposals would have cost the state far too much. The most important change effected was to oust from the Kaiser's own large theatre in the heart of Berlin the old officials who had been subservient to his whims, and to appoint as general manager Dr. Leopold Jessner, who is genuinely liberal in his

views and has also won an enviable reputation as a thorough scholar and as an able interpreter of the drama. In talking to managers of other large city theatres I found only the highest respect for Dr. Jessner's ability, and never once heard mention of his politics. Dr. Jessner was given complete control of the theatre and of its work. He enjoys the confidence of the public, and the state is wise enough to see that in matters of artistic standards constant interference by an always changing popular taste is detrimental to the people's good.

The theatre was made accessible to the people by issuing very reasonable subscriptions to its repertory, and by turning over a large part of the house for several evenings of each week to the People's Drama League. Because of the financial embarrassment of the state this policy has not yet been fully realized. On first nights and at other gala performances substantial prices are still being charged so as to flatter the profiteer into involuntary contributions to a popular institution. Nevertheless the state pays to Dr. Jessner's work a subsidy of many millions marks a year.

Dr. Jessner is the very antithesis of Reinhardt. Already he has swept the tinsel of the Prussian trappings off the former emperor's favorite stage. He believes that instead of working by means of mass effects in decoration, chorus, ballet and other such stimulants for tired nerves, the stage should seek its effects by presenting spiritual conflict as directly as possible, in a simple, convincing way. He believes that audiences must be educated to this kind of performance and that simplicity will most surely awaken in them a healthy reaction to art. His genius lies in his ability to impart to his actors a thorough knowledge of the peculiar character of the individual plays, to train them in a rich and clear diction, and by simple effects to reduce background and costumes to a symbolic picture of the action. Through the extreme simplicity of the decorations and costumes, he forces the whole attention of the audience upon the spoken word. Because of the excellent training in clear diction which he gives his actors, he produces remarkable effects and succeeds in winning close attention

from his audience. It would never occur to a Jessner audience during one of his successful performances to interrupt the play with applause before the final curtain drops. At times, to be sure, his expressionistic theory leads him too far and his symbolism appears a mere caricature; but with a reverent audience even an experiment that dares too much will succeed. Jessner's simplicity so well expresses the transition from court to people's theatre, that when he becomes too subtle the audience tends to blame itself rather than the director. The attitude of the old court audience that still persists in visiting the theatre also enhances Jessner's popularity. At the end of a new interpretation of an old favorite a part of the audience often will applaud wildly, while the smaller, older group will hiss and raise the cry: "We want our old stage!" That, too, gives the people a new sense of their freedom.

Examination of the repertory under Jessner's direction does not disclose a very radical change from the days of the court theatre. The difference lies rather in the truer, freer spirit of their interpretation. The old system was wise enough to play the nation's classics. It was more through the distribution of emphasis that it undertook to carry on its "clever" education. Only in patronage of modern authors did it openly show favoritism. Like most German directors when they have arrived at the head of their profession, Jessner delights in winning startling effects from new interpretations of Shakespeare. He plays Schiller as the old court theatre never saw him, opening up before the people the whole fervor of Schiller's revolutionary ardor and letting the pathos of his exhortation to national restraint make its irresistible appeal. He has not yet had time to introduce his own ideas of *Faust*, but of the nineteenth century classics, particularly those of Hebbel and Kleist, he has given excellent productions. In accordance with the common German taste, his favorite modern dramatists are Hauptmann, Wedekind, Strindberg and Ibsen. But he disregards the early work of Strindberg and concentrates upon the quiet, thoughtful, far more spiritual later dramas; he drops entirely the later problem plays of Ibsen and tries to



make his audience intimate with the soul of Brand and of Peer Gynt and the inner conflict of Hakon and of Skule. Among the youngest dramatists he favors those who approach nearest his own interest in inner spiritual action. He expended much effort, while I had the opportunity of watching him, in attempts to rescue Hans Franck's *Godiva*, a work excellent in parts but unequal. But Germany's present confusion is not producing very clear dramatic expressions, and Jessner is at least alert enough not to be caught by the immature productions of the new expressionists, who turn out so-called "spiritual" dramas according to the latest demands of expressionistic theory, but do not create a deeper vision of their life or of the life of the nation.

Jessner also has closed his stage to those old favorites of the court who before its fall lived an easy life by lending their talents to flattering its vanities. If Jessner can prevent it, Sudermann will not be seen upon his stage. When he took control he refused to play a new drama of Sudermann's, the contract for which he had inherited. Sudermann, however, went to court and won, and Jessner had to bring out his play. He made an excellent performance of it and took in good receipts to help him in his more serious experiments, but his attitude clearly gave warning that Sudermann's tribe will have to seek another stage than the one which is devoted to giving the people expressions of themselves.

The old court opera proved too expensive an institution to popularize: With the exception of Wagner's music drama the opera is by nature a decorative appendage of the court and, in spite of the artistic gems contained in it, its expensive trappings tend to estrange the people. To meet the excessive cost of the opera it was necessary to increase considerably the prices of admission. For economic reasons the gaudy settings of the old régime had to be retained. Arrangements are now being considered, however, both to modernize the opera in accordance with the more genuine and less pretentious taste of the time, and to devise means by which the people may be given a chance to hear the opera at popular prices.

## v

But Jessner, with all his reform and his deep sense of obligation to the people, is nevertheless an official of the state. Though it is a revolutionary state and representative of the will of the people, it does not yet command their faith. Therefore, while the people respect Jessner and sit reverently before his stage, they hesitate to accept his work whole-heartedly. Their hesitation does not mean a lack of appreciation for the drama but rather the very opposite. They see in the great dramas of their poets so intimate an expression of themselves, and in the crisis now upon them they are so intent on getting the clearest possible insight into those expressions, that they instinctively and often vehemently resent anything that makes these dramas seem more distant. That is why they turn in such anger against Reinhardt and why Jessner must still work without their full confidence. That accounts too for the marvelous success of the People's Drama League of Greater Berlin, which today maintains two large theatres built from the people's voluntary contributions and which, if equipment permitted, could quickly double its present membership of 120,000.

The People's Drama League is an organization of long standing. Arising from the conviction, which has never wholly been lost sight of among the German people, that the drama is mainly a crystallized and solemn expression of the essential experience common to the people as a whole, it has had from the beginning the object of freeing the theatre from commercialism and paternalism, and of again emphasizing the spiritual attitude of the people to the drama. Its idea is not, nor was it ever, merely to give better performances than were presented on many a royal stage, where toadying often went for more than talent; nor does it principally seek chances to perform those plays which the court refused through fear of their revolutionary spirit; but it strives to rejuvenate and refresh the stage at the very heart of it by a thoroughly new reunion with the people as a whole. At the very beginning of

the movement it was realized that the means of reaching such a goal must be those most natural to the growth of the stage, but also the most difficult: a reorganization of the audience so as to establish an intimate relationship between it and the stage.

With the rise and victory of the new naturalism in the eighties of the last century a revolutionary spirit took strong hold of the German drama under the leadership of the great international quartet: Ibsen, Tolstoy, Dostoevski and Zola. The government exercised a ruthless censorship to keep the dangerous spirit off the stage; but with the founding of the *Freie Bühne* by Otto Brahm, official interference was avoided by those, at least, who could afford to belong to this exclusive society of liberal devotees to art. With the rise of the new drama and its intense interest in the miseries and hardships of the lower classes, these classes began to grow more conscious of themselves, to demand a greater share of life, and to organize for political action. What was more natural than that the desire should arise, on the one hand to make accessible to these masses the visions of their struggle, that the great dramatists were attempting to express, and on the other hand to win for the dramas the audience for which they were principally meant? This idea was set in motion in the spring of 1890 by Dr. Bruno Wille. In the summer of that year at a large mass meeting, attended by the interested authors and some two thousand workers, it was decided to form a society which should meet monthly at some large theatre to attend a performance of one of the new plays. The conditions of admission were arranged so that even the poorest could be present. At the first performance on October 19, 1890, *The Pillars of Society* was given. Ibsen remained a decided favorite for a long time. The only older German plays given were Schiller's revolutionary dramas, *The Robbers* and *Love and Intrigue*, and Hebbel's *Mary Magdalene*. Of the new dramatists Hauptmann was played most, then Anzengruber and occasionally Halbe and Sudermann. The organization of the society was thoroughly democratic

except that the director and his advisory council, who were chosen by the society in convention, were given absolute authority in artistic matters. All seats were of one price, about ten cents, and were distributed by lot at each performance.

The spirit of the audience in those early days can be seen best from the following anecdote: <sup>1</sup> "In February 1891 Henrik Ibsen attended a performance of the *Freie Volksbühne* at the Lessing Theatre. He sat between Bebel and Bruno Wille. Oskar Blumenthal, the director of the theatre, told us of the impression made upon him by the breathless attention and devotion of the audience. The play was Sudermann's *Ehre*. When the storm of applause broke over the house after the powerful effect of the final scene, the taciturn Ibsen, full of astonishment, turned to his companion and cried, "What an audience!" and again, "What an audience!"

Because the movement was organized as a private society the police could not lawfully apply the censorship. An injunction proceeding was, however, instituted against it in an effort to prove it a political society, and therefore subject to control. In court it established the fact that while it professed socialistic principles, these were not political but principles of general conduct, and the injunction was dropped. The old Prussian paternalism never did succeed in finding a way of subduing revolt that assumed the philosophical form of a *Weltanschauung*. Even in its machinations it was "orderly."

A certain amount of party politics has always exerted some pressure within the organization to its real detriment, even though at the very start the principle was insisted upon that political and artistic expressions should not and could not interfere with each other. The more dogmatic party Socialists became dissatisfied with the repertory selected by the director and his council, and demanded a share in the arrangements.

<sup>1</sup> *Wesen und Weg der Berliner Volksbühnenbewegung*, Berlin, 1920, p. 6. This is a collection of essays on the work of the Drama League, edited by Julius Bab, one of the foremost dramatic critics of Berlin today, to whose liberal help and inspiration during my recent trip to Germany I owe very much.

A bitter strife ensued with the result that in October 1892 Bruno Wille and most of the authors interested in the movement split off and formed the *Neue Freie Volksbühne*, in which freedom of artistic standards from socialistic influence was insisted upon more strongly than was pleasing to the majority of the older society. This quarrel became very intense. The two societies felt that they fundamentally disagreed. In actual procedure the more "political" *Freie Volksbühne* soon realized that harm must result from a mixture of motives, and that art and politics are not compatible. The *Neue Freie Volksbühne*, on the other hand, could not attain its main object, the rearing of a new and fresh audience for the drama, without an intimate relationship with the people and the great labor organizations. So it happened that, though each society fought its fight alone for two decades, they could finally reunite without the necessity of much compromise.

The *Freie Volksbühne*, under the chairmanship of the liberal Franz Mehring, who was widely known among the workers for his writings, organized along far-reaching democratic lines. Even the director, and the advisory council for matters pertaining to artistic standards, were chosen by the society at large. The program was directed primarily toward making good drama accessible to the people at a very low admission, and developing within this new audience a thorough understanding and genuine appreciation of the drama. The society also hoped, through the pressure such an audience would exert, to bring about the birth of a new modern drama: a drama which, in a real sense, would mirror the new life that was coming. In 1895 it had a membership of 6,000. The police then saw their chance to interfere. They maintained that with so large a membership the society could no longer claim the immunity of a private organization, but would have to be considered a public institution, subject to censorship. Well knowing that with Prussian censorship in control its real life would be slowly but effectually throttled, the society fought hard in the courts to maintain its character. The *Neue*

*Freie Volksbühne*, with all the authority of its many well-known writers, came to the aid of the older society. Even a large part of the press helped in the fight. But the court decided in favor of the government.

Rather than submit, however, the society decided to disband. The few years it had been allowed to function unmolested had not brought to realization the hope that many of the members were most anxiously and impatiently entertaining. The new drama which was to be the expression of the inner powers of a new class failed to appear. Hauptmann's *Before Sunrise* and *The Weavers* had raised their expectations high, but neither the work of Hauptmann nor the German drama in general developed in such a way as to bring the goal nearer. Where it was best, it took another course entirely; where it held too closely to the course, it became propaganda, losing its artistic value and along with this its appeal even to an audience such as the society afforded. For though these people were very humble and untutored they were unusually keen to sense the difference between the real and the affected, and they were led by men sincere in purpose and with no trace of a desire to use their popularity with the people for political ends.

Though disbanded and though disappointed in their principal hope, yet they persisted in their desire for good drama, especially for better and more intimate performances of the dramas of older days. After two years they reorganized with a constitution carefully prepared to make it hard for the police to interfere. For thirteen years the work went on unmolested. At first the performances were given on Sunday afternoons in a theatre rented for the purpose, and by a company of interested actors, many of whom were among the best in the city and willing to give their services free. As the society grew and had to expand, blocks of seats were rented for its members at the regular theatres when plays were given in conformity with the spirit of the society. But as the necessity of this policy grew and the control over the repertory decreased the society strongly desired a theatre of its own,

a *Kunstheim* for the workers of Berlin. Plans for such a theatre were made and a goodly fund started by issuing to members building bonds of five dollars each, but the police again interfered. This new interference is hard to explain on any other grounds than the Prussian system's stupid jealousy of all education outside of its own omniscient tutelage.

The members of the *Freie Volksbühne* were mostly of the class of skilled workers and small merchants. Of the 7,000 members in 1901 less than a thousand were unskilled workers. The repertory of plays from the time of reorganization to the outbreak of the war was one of which any theatre might be proud. Hauptmann and Ibsen were played most, followed in the order of the number of performances, by Schnitzler, Strindberg, Dreyer, Goethe, Shakespeare, Hebbel, Anzengruber, Shaw, Schiller, Lessing, Grillparzer, Molière, Björnson, Heyjermans, Sudermann, Halbe, Bahr, Maeterlinck, Fulda, Nestroy, and a few scattering lesser men. Of this list Dreyer alone might be called a mediocre propaganda dramatist. Shaw was always very popular on the German stage, not so much for his caustic satire upon society as for his humor. German dramatists do not give their audience much chance to laugh. In the above list Bahr alone has a keen talent for comedy, Fulda's comedies being rather heavily sentimental. The German stage frankly depends for its good comedies on Molière, Oscar Wilde and Shaw.

The Prussian police, however, paid little attention to artistic standards or to justice. The famous, much decorated von Jagow was *Polizeipräsident* and was thoroughly enjoying his authority. In the winter of 1910 he issued a typical ukase imposing strict censorship upon both drama leagues, and the German courts upheld him with typical servility, though almost the whole of literary Germany vehemently and publicly protested. This time, however, the leagues did not disband. They submitted to Prussian censorship and had to suffer repeated stupid interference. Conscious of their strength they fought on in the hope that their point of view would ultimately

triumph. Persecution again brought the two leagues together and thus prepared the way for the work they were to take up with the outbreak of the revolution.

## VI

The story of the dissenting league, the *Neue Freie Volksbühne*, is one of similar struggle, but of even greater success. It started with a healthier foundation, freer from any danger of mixing politics and art. It differed from the older league in that it determined that matters of artistic standards should be left wholly to competent authorities and not be subject to the will of the society as a whole. It could thus maintain the highest standards and steer directly for the purpose both leagues professed supreme: that of rearing from among the common people a fresh, receptive, but understanding audience. Among its members it counted the foremost of German writers. It opened its program in November 1892 with an excellent Sunday afternoon performance of *Faust*, at a membership admission of fifty pfennigs. It worried the police by giving the first performance of Hauptmann's *Weavers* while this play was still forbidden on the public stage, and produced for the first time in Germany the equally disturbing play by Björnson, *Beyond our Powers*. In 1895 the police succeeded in stopping it for a while, the occasion being a proposed production of a satire on the clergy by Anzengruber. The censor interfered, and the trial that ensued was so long and costly that it exhausted the resources of the members and for a while the League disbanded. It soon reorganized, however, with a constitution assuring greater immunity from persecution; but it had to wage a long and hard up-hill fight for nearly fourteen years.

Its alert interest in the forward march of the drama enabled it to seize upon the moment when a natural change in dramatic expression was taking root, and it thus profited from the momentum of new and sound departure. The old naturalism, which had given birth to the league idea, was turning into



sensational materialism on the regular stage, and in the leagues was being spoiled by too strong a tendency to socialistic propaganda. The moment called for the healthy, joyous appeal to the senses, without which no drama ever can exist for long. Reinhardt, who was just beginning to capture the imagination of Germany, saw the need and took measures to meet it. He had just opened his first large theatre in Berlin, and with an excellent company, gathered together with his unerring instinct for stage talent, he played a repertory of Maeterlinck, Hofmannsthal and Wedekind. The *Neue Freie Volksbühne* at once leased every Sunday and holiday matinee at Reinhardt's theatre. In a short time its membership increased to 10,000, composed, very much like that of the older league, of small merchants and skilled workers. When in 1905 Reinhardt took over the famous *Deutsches Theater*, the League followed him. Owing to his excellent performances the League grew very quickly, so that Reinhardt, who today is scorned by the members of the League and suspected of commercialism, is in a large measure responsible for its existence.

In 1907 the League, with a membership of 19,000, elaborately celebrated its fifteenth anniversary by electing to honorary membership its four most popular champions, Agnes Sorma, Clara Viebig, Gerhart Hauptmann and Richard Strauss. In 1908 it was leasing the afternoon performances in eleven theatres, and certain evening performances at the *Deutsches Theater*. It then decided that in order to perform its work properly, in order to give its members the repertory it believed to be best, and the surroundings it thought essential, in order to develop the new style which it thought the spirit of the League would ultimately create, it must have a house of its own. The balance of 10,000 marks in the League's treasury was converted into a building fund. With each ticket was sold a building fund stamp of 10 pfennigs. Fifty marks' worth of stamps would buy a certificate which bore interest at five per cent. By this method and by the purchase of bonds of low denomination, 250,000 marks were contributed by 1910. Two years later the membership had increased to nearly 50,000 and the

building fund to 650,000 marks. The police repeatedly tried to interfere with the growth of the society by indiscriminate application of the censorship, but on each occasion vehement protests were made throughout the country, as a result of which the League gained the sort of wide public respect of which the Prussian system has always stood in awe. It therefore now assumed a friendly attitude to the League. In the final plans for the erection of a theatre the city came to the League's aid. Out in the eastern part of the city several blocks of dilapidated and disreputable slums had just been razed. This site the city offered to the League at a very reasonable figure for the erection of its house, and also granted to it a loan of 2,000,000 marks at a low rate of interest.

When the success of the undertaking was thus assured and the road cleared for the realization of its project, the *Neue Freie Volksbühne* approached the older league. It proposed that they settle their differences and unite into one large league, so as to proceed the more surely toward the common goal: the putting of art at the disposal of the people and the opening of their minds and senses to an even greater understanding and appreciation. There still threatened a bit of friction because of socialistic dogmatism within the older league, but an appeal to the supremacy of art succeeded in clearing away all obstacles. Just before the war the union was effected and the building was begun. The outbreak of the war produced a strong spirit of chauvinism and a strong assertion of the authority of the state against popular movements, especially of a spiritual kind. But though delayed in its work the League still maintained its purpose. On December 20, 1914, the new theatre was dedicated. It had cost 4,500,000 marks, more than half of which was represented by bonds held by 14,500 individual members of the League, mostly workers. The building is large, seating nearly two thousand, stately and even rich, but without a trace of pretentiousness. It is equipped with the latest approved stage machinery, revolving stage and other mysterious apparatus, explained to my ignorance by the proud head mechanician as he led me with a

proprietary air through his back-stage labyrinth of intricate machines and chambers of horrors. The pride and joy in it evinced by even the scrubwomen is one of the greatest testimonies to the spirit that has made its building possible. The broad, almost semi-circular auditorium is very different from the usual ostentatious Berlin theatre. There is not a trace of gilded stucco or of startling plush. All the woodwork is of rich and beautiful mahogany, with quiet, symbolic carvings sparingly distributed. It has a large floor space, a fairly deep balcony, two narrow galleries, and not a single box. It makes a comfortable, dignified auditorium, clearly showing that the builders were intent upon eliminating so far as possible all difference in seating preference, and upon giving each guest the comfort necessary to enjoyment. The entrance lobby and the refreshment halls and promenades on the various floors are planned in the same rich and dignified simplicity. The back of the theatre is furnished with the numerous offices and committee rooms necessary for carrying on the business of the League. The building with its dignified façade faces a large square in the most congested center of humble workers' tenements. From over the six massive pillars of its curved front there blazes out the message: *Die Kunst dem Volke*.

The drain of the war, however, was too hard upon the League. It could not pay for the upkeep of the house and support the heavy expenses of its own company. Reinhardt again had to come to the rescue. In return for a free use of the theatre, he proposed to play there with his company and turn over half the seats for each performance to the League. In that way the crisis was bridged. But as the revolution approached, the people became more intent again on taking up their own purpose through a repertory by the men in whom they placed their faith. In September 1918 the League again took full control with its own company, in charge of Friedrich Kayssler, who is not only one of the best actors in Germany, but a critic of the finest discernment and high standards and an ardent advocate of the idea of the People's League. In the

public announcement of his appointment, the future program of the League was formulated thus:

"In his whole character Friedrich Kayssler manifests that respect for his fellowmen, that affection for the great, darkly struggling mass of the people, without which our principal coworker cannot be imagined. And yet, more than many who are in the midst of the gay clamor of the so-called 'great society,' he shows that proud, independent, defiant and reserved nobility, without which no real artist can prosper. From the hands of such men the People's League may hope to receive that which it most needs.

"What is it that we hope and expect? Not sensation. *We do not expect extraordinary innovations or dazzling hits. We expect the slow, quiet, firm and serious development of a company of our own, with our own purpose in view, in a broad repertory which will have regard for all the values of great dramatic literature.* Neither in respect to literature nor to acting nor to stage reform do we want the predominance of a fad, however dazzling or popular it may be; but we do expect new adjustment and new perfecting of all the means of the theatre to meet the special character of the most varied problems which the prominent poets of the past and of the future will set before us. We also expect that the most recent German drama will be fostered, but without any of the haste which seizes upon oddities in order to attract attention and get the better of a competitor. We intend to take a risk for the sake of young talent, and will not shun further risks after a first failure; but above all things, effort and time must be reserved to express with ever new devotion and to offer with greatest clarity, to the people who are desirous to enjoy them, the great dramatic expressions from Aeschylus to Hauptmann and from Shakespeare to Strindberg."<sup>2</sup>

When I saw the League in action in the fall of 1920, its influence, power, and hold upon the people were definitely fixed. It was forced to limit its membership to 120,000 rather than to make new appeals. Because large numbers were

<sup>2</sup> *Wesen und Weg der Berliner Volksbühnenbewegung*, p. 22.

clamoring for admission, it had decided at the beginning of the 1920 season to increase its accommodations by allowing each member only ten performances a year instead of eleven. This made room for 20,000 new members. At nine o'clock on the morning of August 11th the applications were received. The line about the theatre had formed at six, and at nine extended all around the building four abreast. By noon of August 13th the last membership ticket had been issued and the remaining crowds had to be refused. According to the statement of the officials the membership would be quickly doubled if there were means of finding proper accommodations.

Though it is doing so reluctantly, the League is at present forced to rent large blocks of seats at thirteen theatres. Its relations with Jessner at the state theatre are very cordial and intimate. His sympathy with the movement goes to the extent of a conviction that the future of the German stage depends principally upon the organization of people's drama leagues. The leaders of the league idea, however, are convinced that only in theatres of their own will their purpose have a chance fully to mature. They have, therefore, decided upon a second house. They have leased from the city for a term of twenty-five years the large Kroll Opera House, which, in anything but good condition before the war, was used as a hospital during that period and is now in very bad repair. The terms of the lease require of the *Volksbühne* that it convert the old building into a dignified people's theatre and turn it back to the city in good repair at the expiration of the lease. In return, the city assumes the burden of staging there, with the companies of its two theatres, performances of both drama and opera in repertoires approved by the authorities of the League. This will enable the society to accept an additional 100,000 members, and also to supply its members with an opportunity of enjoying opera, the want of which has long been felt. The plans for the remodelling of this theatre are already complete. It will have a seating capacity of 2150 and will cost approximately twelve million marks. The plans for selling bonds for the new project had been announced only

a few months before I visited the society, but three million marks had already been subscribed in denominations varying from twenty to one thousand marks. I was at the offices of the theatre on the evening of the first of the month, and saw these workers in what was evidently their best attire, waiting in long lines for a chance to make their regular payments toward the loan. It was a quiet, eager throng, in pleasant contrast to the shabby gayety that crowds about the cheaper movies or the race-courses of Germany today. These men, at least, are soberly and intently interested in becoming acquainted with those values which, once well learned, will be a great help in dispelling the darkness through which they now stumble along the paths of their new responsibilities.

The membership of the League is, of course, not limited to any one class. The idea of creating a fresh audience, unsophisticated and receptive to simple artistic expression, was paramount in the minds of the founders and has persisted. One of the primary purposes of the League — and it is still as strong as ever — was the desire to clarify the minds and senses of the workers; but a strong stand is taken against introducing any political propaganda, or fostering any so-called proletarian art. Because of this stand the League has bitter enemies who deride it as “bourgeois” propaganda. The Independent Socialists, for example, rather than encourage their members to join the League, arrange each winter, in Reinhardt’s circus theatre, a series of “festive hours for workers,” at which some excellent things are done but also much frank political, party instruction is given. The *Volksbühne* is happily free from such a thing; the whole question of class struggle seems to have been set aside. Membership fees are very small, and theatre admission in the fall of 1920 was only two and a half marks for matinees and four marks for evening performances, with the mark worth less than two cents. It is not cheapness, however, that accounts for the popularity the League enjoys among the workers. Their interest and pride in it, the jealousy with which they guard its purpose, is far too deep for that. Besides, the motion picture theatres are

both cheaper and infinitely more sensational. The low admissions have drawn a large number of the middle class, who find that they cannot afford to pay the regular prices at the theatres, and flock into the League, not because they believe in or are particularly interested in its purpose, but to satisfy their cravings for good drama. The coming of this class has made no perceptible difference in the society. Moreover the intermingling of the classes at the theatre, the absolute equality of persons guaranteed by the constitution and emphasized by its machinery, tends to wipe out the consciousness of class distinctions, while the quality of the performances inspires all alike with the dignity of the endeavor.

Each member is assigned ten performances a season which he pledges himself actually to attend. If for some good reason he finds it impossible, other arrangements will be made for him. But the society has no provision for members who wish simply to give their moral support and not attend the plays in person. On the day of his assigned performance the member buys his ticket of admission on presentation of his card at the nearest of the many substations scattered about the city. With this ticket he goes to the theatre and from one of the large urns in the entrance lobby draws his seat, or block of seats, if he is with his family. Where he sits or who his neighbor will be is merely a matter of chance. Partly to help toward paying the expenses of the house, partly to avoid the danger that a constantly assured and definitely constituted audience may lower the standard of acting or dull the critical sense of the manager, about a fourth of the seats, scattered throughout the house, are sold at regular box office prices, ten times that of the membership admission. Thus far these seats have always been in great demand, so that the audience is thoroughly representative and there is very rarely a vacant seat. When blocks of seats are bought for members at other theatres, these also are selected from all over the house, except that they include none of the poorest gallery seats, the discomfort of which makes impossible a full appreciation of the play.

The ushers, called *Ordner* ("arrangers"), form an impor-

tant group within the organization. They are members who volunteer to usher, collect the tickets, supervise the allotment of seats, inspect the membership cards, and do whatever other work is necessary in the auditorium or lobbies during a performance. Because of the interest they manifest by thus donating their time, and because of their constant contact with the members, they act as intermediaries between the bulk of the members and the officers. In order to give the members a better chance to express their wishes, as well as better to reach each member with an explanation of the purpose of the League, the larger organization is divided into sections of about 4000 each. Each section meets at least once a year to discuss the work of the League and to choose delegates for the general convention, half of whom must be ushers.

The general convention elects the business management of the League and half of the advisory council. It gives instructions to the business management and passes resolutions in the form of recommendations to the advisory council. It also has the power of confirming the choice of the general director of the theatre on recommendation from the advisory council and the business management.

The advisory council consists of nine men chosen by the general convention and of an equal number, experts in the drama and the theatre, designated by the business management. This body, together with the officers of the League, determines the repertory and has general charge of the artistic standards. A thorough and free discussion of these standards is invited and encouraged in the League at large. But the final determination and the responsibility for it lies with the advisory council, so as to safeguard the principal aim of the society: the education of the audience. The means to the realization of this aim is the introduction of a better repertory, presented with the greatest truth, simplicity, and artistic setting, in order to create the most intimate relation between the audience and the vision of the artist on the stage. Far from fostering a proletarian drama the council rather bends its efforts to so organizing the repertory that in the course, not of



a season, but of years, a synthetic picture of the drama will be constructed. While they profess to favor a revolutionary program in the present crisis, they explained to me that they considered any drama revolutionary, old or new, if it gives the people a better insight into themselves and the forces of society, and starts them upon a clearer onward path. At the same time it is decidedly the tendency of the League to encourage modern playwrights, both in order to give young authors every possible chance to see their plays produced, and to test before an audience which is fresh, but for that very reason quick to resent adulteration, attempts at crystallizing the new spirit. Before they are accepted, however, these modern plays must show real qualities of art. There was some stir among the members, to be sure, when the advisory council refused to stage the revolutionary drama by Kurt Eisner, which was found among the effects of this most popular martyr of the revolution after his assassination. The wishes of the members were denied because, in the estimation of the council, this drama contained no real artistic qualities. During the season of 1919 to 1920 the modern plays presented at the League's theatre were: 's *Jungferngift*, by Anzengruber, who has remained a favorite with the people since the early days of naturalism; Kaiser's *Gas*, a terrible picture of society as it degenerates into a machine, and *Die Bürger von Kalais*; *The Love Potion*, by Wedekind; and *Predigt von Littauen*, by Lauckner. Of the German classics Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, Hebbel's *Gyges und Sein Ring*, and Kleist's *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn* were given, as well as three farces by minor playwrights. Of non-German dramas the League presented Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, Calderón's *The Judge of Zalamea*, Björnson's *Paul Lange and Zora Parsberg*, and of Strindberg *Luther* and the first part of *Toward Damascus*. This repertory is certainly not over-revolutionary.

But more than the repertory, the attitude of the audience and the quality of the acting made this theatre distinctive as an institution. All the actors are professionals and several of

them of high repute in Germany. Their close coöperation, and the atmosphere of religious intensity or of popular humor that they are able to create upon the stage, shows how thoroughly their leader, Friedrich Kayssler, has imbued them with his faith in the importance of the work. At times this attitude is decidedly overdone, especially when the actors are tugged too hard by the heavy German sentimentalism to which this audience seems more subject than the old more sophisticated one.

For the programs at the theatre one of the advisory council, or more often Kayssler himself, prepares a short essay in order to acquaint the members with the author and the play, its part in the history of the drama, and the particular interpretation which the company has put upon it. Some of Kayssler's very best work lies in these essays. He never condescends in them, as though he were instructing men of lower intelligence. The essays are simple, scholarly talks setting forth his personal attitude to the author and to the play concerned.

The work of the League is not wholly confined to the drama. For those who care to attend, lectures are arranged throughout the season, dealing especially with the history and underlying principles of the drama. In addition a series of readings from modern lyrics, an elaborate and excellent concert program under the supervision of Leo Kestenberg, even expeditions through the museums of Berlin for a glimpse of other arts, are all provided.

The most genuine enthusiasm and serious purpose is, however, concentrated upon the drama. By applying themselves to it, the people seek to enter into the mystery of the relation of art to life. That it is one of closest intimacy is a conviction which has been the very life of German drama. Now that this new theatre has made the best of drama accessible to the people the conception of its relation to their lives is taking strong hold upon them, so that they are not only assuming a more intelligent attitude toward the drama but are demanding closer contact with it. Some of the more enthusiastic leaders of the movement, seeing the rapid improvement of the

audience, were anxious to go a long step forward, and started an agitation for the complete communizing of the theatre. They proposed, somewhat on the theory of the League that the cities be divided into theatre communes, to which each person in the specified district would belong upon pledging himself to attend performances. The city was to requisition the existing playhouses and allot them to the communes. The repertory and its execution were to be determined by the delegates of the communes, and the expenses defrayed from the taxes of the city. Nothing expresses more clearly the quality of the League's work and the effect of that work upon the members, than the sober reaction to proposals such as these. They refused to run the risk of political interference with their purpose or of bureaucratization. They expect the city to express a sympathetic attitude by lightening the financial burdens of the League, and by freeing them from the imposition of the taxes to which commercial theatres are subject; but they desire no political interference. They believe that their present organization practically solves the question of the socialization of the theatre. They are convinced that they will be able to provide additional houses without outside help as more and more of the people clamor for admission, and they are very proud of the progress they have made in eliminating not merely commercialism but all sense of class distinction.

## VII

In October 1920 a long sought purpose of the General Secretary of the *Volksbühne*, Dr. Nestriepke, was realized at a national conference of similar societies throughout Germany, which he had succeeded in calling under the auspices of the Berlin society. At this meeting the "Union of German Drama Leagues" was organized by representatives of some thirty cities of North and Central Germany. The absence of representatives from South Germany was felt with more grief than resentment since they realized the reactionary spirit which controlled the government of the South to the exclusion of

successful popular movements in those places. Even in Southern Germany, where, in spite of official opposition, such movements had established themselves, the regional mistrust of Prussia would still make coöperation difficult.

I attended the meetings at which the new Union was organized and on many points I found a spirit of perfect agreement. In the main the Union is to be an organization for mutual assistance in the development of the league idea by encouraging an exchange of views between the various leagues, by advising and aiding the members thereof, by public propaganda for its principles, by defending the interests of the societies within the Union against the courts and public officials, and by furthering all undertakings which aim to put art at the disposal of the people in theatres of their own. Membership in the Union is to be granted to those societies whose purpose is "to make available to their members, at the lowest possible uniform prices of admission and without profit, dramatic performances of high artistic standard by professional actors," and to organize themselves on the principle of the "self-determination of their members." Thus far there was very little discussion. The term "self-determination of members" seemed to delight the meeting, but no one undertook to discuss its exact meaning. On the next point, however, there ensued a very lively fight. It was finally decided that all societies seeking admission to the Union must "acknowledge the principle of political and religious neutrality and under all conditions refuse to put themselves in opposition to the socialist movement." During the discussions arising out of this formulation, the old political quarrel which had once disrupted the work at Berlin and finally been successfully allayed, came to the fore and dangerously threatened for a while. It probably will grumble underneath for a long time to come and take much tactful handling. The delegates from the more radical centers, especially of Saxony, openly fought for the idea that the Union must be a powerful instrument for socialistic, political propaganda. But the men of Berlin, particularly the keen dramatic critic, Julius Bab, forced them into a discussion of

the nature of artistic standards and the impossibility of a relation between art and propaganda, political or any other kind; and they had to retreat with what grace they could. For a time these radicals maintained that they should not be able to induce their societies to join under the circumstances; but the large majority replied to this threat with dignified regret and with a new insistence upon artistic standards. They were ready, however, to emphasize their principle by stating that they also refused to have their work serve for anti-socialistic propaganda.

Wherever the Union appears it has to contend with much opposition from the reactionary elements. In the Rhine provinces and in South Germany, where reaction is in the control of the Catholic Center, religious and political opposition unite to impede its work. The delegates from Cologne, for example, contended that they should not be able to join the Union if in its constitution it insisted upon political and religious neutrality, because the authorities of Cologne would arbitrarily refuse them a theatre license. They were advised to join in spite of this and to take up the fight, if need be, in the assurance that the Union would help them win their rights.

This religious and reactionary opposition generally takes on a more subtle and interesting form than such crude political interference. After the establishment of the *Volksbühne* a society was incorporated in Frankfurt on the Main by wealthy, ardent Catholic reactionaries, who set up in every center of the Rhine Provinces, where the *Volksbühne* meets with success, a counter *Bühnenvolksbund*. This offers the people a chance to enjoy dramatic performances under conditions similar to those of the Union, but rarely of as high a quality, and with the set purpose of educating the audience "in the spirit of popular German culture and in a Christian view of life." The work they do is often very good, but they spoil it by their propaganda against all plays whose authors they can convict of socialistic or even of liberal leanings. In one interesting instance, in the City of Münster in Westphalia, the *Volksbühne* and the *Bühnenvolksbund* both run very good theatres and even coöp-

erate extensively. They seem to accept the situation that the devoutly Catholic population cannot attend performances of the regular League in an unprejudiced spirit, and that the artistic reaction of this group is therefore purest in its own theatres.

In a similar way, the more radical elements of the Berlin League, who are sincerely and passionately striving to know the meaning of the revolution, to see the nature of its new ethics and the new human powers which are developing through it, are exerting pressure upon the officials to offer greater opportunities for the plays of young revolutionary poets. Arrangements have been made to rent some small theatre occasionally during the season of 1921-1922 in order to stage such of these plays as the advisory council deems of sufficient artistic excellence. But because neither the style nor the subject matter of such plays is intelligible or sympathetic to the average member, they will not be included in the repertory and admission to them will require a special fee, so as to draw only those interested.

I watched the spirit and the work of the League in Berlin at every possible chance. In the main the members are simple folk, a bit too serious perhaps; but the times are more serious still. While the majority of the workers are seeking stupefying enjoyment and excitement, these people are calmly intent on watching the expressions of great artists, to see if through these they may learn to know themselves better and to get hold of some stable force in the bewildering confusion. Moreover, many of their fellow members are of the cultured middle classes, who seek through the advantages of the League to maintain that contact with art which they can no longer find at the regular theatres, controlled by the profiteer with his money and his insistence upon cheap stimulants. So the workers and the cultured middle class are learning to know and appreciate each other to their mutual advantage.

When I spoke of the League to my friend, the former Professor of Philosophy at Heidelberg, hidden away in the small village by the Starnberger Lake so as not to be caught in the present shams and confusions of his country, he shook

his head at my faith in its work. "The greatest cant in Germany today is 'the people.' They do not go to the theatre for the reasons you infer. They go because formerly it was the privilege of their superiors, and now they take the chance to 'decorate' themselves with art." But that, I know, is not the case with those audiences of the League which I watched at Berlin. There was no affectation in their attitude, but calm concentration upon a new purpose. Their influence will not appear at once; but I feel convinced that with the members of the Workmen's Educational Association they will do more than any other group to bring the country gradually back to health.

## V

### WEIMAR

#### I

**W**EIMAR is a natural objective for a student of literature who travels through Germany today in search of some indication of a spirit within the people which may lead them out of their turmoil. Weimar is but a very small city. The inhabitants are dulled, both because their trade has too long been simply to cater to visiting sight-seers, and because the artificial political organization of a petty but proud principality has weighed too heavily upon them, especially in recent decades. It is, nevertheless, the center from which, only a little over a century ago, the power of German liberal idealism so radiated over all of Germany that its force still persists in spite of every obstacle.

The men of Weimar, to be sure, were not the pioneers who first fixed upon, clarified, and developed the idealism of eighteenth-century Germany. That credit belongs above all others to Kant. Kant possessed the keen critical sense with which to clear of inconsistencies and irrelevancies the path toward idealism. He had the lofty ethical fervor which enabled him to sense accurately the native German force and thus give his idealism a real foundation. Still he could not make this idealism the ruling power within the life of the people, for his metaphysics, his visions, and his language were not the kind to establish contact with their thoughts and longings. Before the principles of Kant could enter actively into German life, they had to be expounded by a great teacher who, from a point of view intimately related to the people, could



explain the nature of these principles in terms that everybody could understand. That teacher was Herder.

Weimar was the home not only of Herder but also of Herder's greatest pupils, Goethe and Schiller. These two completed the expression of the idealism of Kant as taught by Herder. Goethe fused the idealism with the basic forces in the nation's life in visions so clear that they became a mirror in which Germany need only look to be reminded of itself. Schiller took the deeper longings and hopes of the people and clarified and strengthened them by means of this same idealism, and then, in his great popular dramas, gave back these native impulses renewed and full of life. Thus to the people Kant is a very great but very distant metaphysician, Herder is a teacher to be highly revered, but Goethe and Schiller are the poets and seers of that which is highest and most fundamental. They are the ideals of the people personified. They are the people's national legend. To the people Weimar and Goethe and Schiller are one. Thus Weimar itself has become the legend containing for the people that which is eternal in themselves; this legend they intimately search for guidance whenever the conviction is forced upon them that their life needs a real renewal.

Never since Weimar's classical days has Germany seen such a dangerous time as it is living through today. Even as it gropes back to Weimar, its touch is not steady or altogether honest. Germany's confusion is so dark that in its greatest distress there are many who are even willing to use its clearest force to further selfish ends.

When the National Constituent Assembly sought a place in which to meet for the framing of the republic's constitution, it fixed upon Weimar, ostensibly because the new republic had been born in a democratic spirit based upon the Weimar ideals of freedom and humanity, and because the new laws were to be an expression of that idealism. The German revolution, however, though it will surely lead the country back to Weimar as it clears, was simply a revolt against unbearable conditions; the natural reaction to an unsuccessful war which a powerful

propaganda had made appear the people's war and which the people had to wage under a general draft. The large democratic vote in the elections to the Constituent Assembly was not so much an expression of conviction as a desire to mollify the victors by a show of change of heart. Weimar was chosen for the meeting because police protection could easily be arranged there against the threatened interference from reactionaries and radicals, and because Weimar might favorably impress the statesmen of the Entente. This was explained to me by delegates to the Convention who were most sincere in their hope that the *real Weimar might revive* and who were bitterly disappointed by the spirit that took hold of the nation when the victors were not easily misled into a full acceptance of the German change of heart. Yet such men as these delegates retain their faith in the ultimate power of Weimar to heal and gradually to lead the nation to a genuine recovery, for they know that this force is fundamental in the nation's life and that once set in motion it will slowly but surely work upon the national mind. So the choice of Weimar was partly for the effect it might have upon the outside world, yet it was also a direct appeal to the true liberalizing idealism of Weimar against the distortions of it by the old system, and therefore it set this idealism freer than it had been. Now the question is how to make it still freer. In the larger cities the people's drama leagues and some of the better new city theatres are doing important work in fostering Weimar's spirit. But if the Weimar legend, with the mysterious power that a national legend has in the shaping of lives, is to take real hold upon the people, Weimar itself must be intimately connected with the work in order to stimulate the people's memory

## II

At the time when the Constituent Assembly met in Weimar the general director of Goethe's theatre was the neo-classical dramatist Ernst Hardt. He is thoroughly alive to the opportunity and, as he sees it, the obligation confronting him: to

restore the Weimar theatre to the position Goethe and Schiller had once conceived for it as the national stage on which to keep the expressions of the national art and ideals before the eyes and minds of the people of the whole country. In these plans Goethe was clearly conscious of setting Weimar in opposition to the ideas of the new national center in Berlin, whose political and material ambitions he mistrusted; and Schiller repeatedly refused a call to the theatre at Berlin because he feared that in the Prussian capital the idealistic motives would soon be buried under theatrical pomp. But within the last half century, the Weimar theatre had degenerated simply into a royal stage whose directors were subservient to the whims of the ruling prince under the dominance of Prussian politics. The revolution swept away the many petty princes of Thuringia and welded it into a single republic, again conscious of the cultural gifts this little romantic patch of German woods had bestowed upon the country in former crises. It put Ernst Hardt in charge of the theatre at Weimar, not only because he is a dramatist of note and had shown himself a fearless liberal in times of stress, but because among the modern poets he is one of the best authorities on German classical literature, and, in the estimate of men like the Goethe expert, George Witkowski of Leipzig, one of the very best producers and interpreters of the dramas of Goethe and Schiller.

In order that his intentions might immediately be established before the country, Ernst Hardt sought and received from the provisional government at Berlin permission to designate the Weimar theatre "The German National Theatre." Thus he tried to direct the eyes of the nation once again upon the need for a rebirth of its culture in a return to Weimar. On the evening of the 6th of February, 1919, the first day of the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly, the delegates met for a performance at the theatre. As a curtain raiser was given a prologue, *The Fountain*, composed by Hardt himself. It is a simple picture of Weimar longing for the return of its people. In a corner of the Weimar park between a bust of Goethe and a similar one of Schiller bubbles a fountain. On the base of

the fountain a youth in Greek garments lies asleep. For a hundred years he has been guarding the fountain and has helped many an eager pilgrim to a refreshing drink. But wearied by the protracted loneliness of many recent years, he has fallen asleep. Heavy, shuffling steps arouse him from his slumbers and there approach a haggard woman, dressed in deep mourning and exhausted with grief, and her only remaining son, a wounded soldier, insane with anger at himself and every other man and thing, capable only of degraded appetites and lusts. But the touch of the youth quiets the ravings, and he leads his soldier-brother to the fountain to drink; then he speaks in simple admonition:

“Come, let *me* take your sick hand,  
My brother! Do not rave and grieve yourself;  
Raise up your head and think upon your worth.  
I’ve guarded here these hundred years and more  
This fountain. O my brother, if you had  
But dipped from it these fatal hundred years  
You would not stand before me as you are.  
For here there rises clear from virgin soil  
The clearest fount of human hopefulness  
Which other people ever praised in you.  
Bend down and drink, for here you can grow sound.  
Come, mother, leave your son here at the fount  
To look upon himself in solitude.  
Upon his head unseen there gently rest  
The greatest German poets’ loving hands  
And bless him as he bravely looks afresh  
Upon his life. Come now, and I will dip  
This cloth far down into the fount and cool,  
While he collects himself, your eyes for you;  
Your poor, dear eyes, which tears have bitten sore.”

Then followed a performance of Schiller’s *Wilhelm Tell*, on which Hardt had worked a long time to make it express as clearly as possible Schiller’s vision of that spirit of freedom

to which the German people should aspire. On the 23rd of March, 1848, a performance of *Tell* at the Berlin Opera had fired the people to a deeper understanding of that revolution and had helped to crystallize the popular purpose. Hardt may have expected a similar effect, but while the reception of the play was hearty, he nevertheless feels that it was not spontaneous nor wholly genuine. It taught him, so he says, that the spirit of Weimar is as yet none too well received in Germany. But for that very reason there is all the greater need of expressing it more clearly and more frequently. Soon after this performance Hardt appeared before the Convention to plead with it for moral and financial support of his undertaking. Instead of granting him the 500,000 marks a year which he requested as a subsidy from the national government, it gave 100,000 marks for a period of three years, together with a goodly supply of praise. However, the new Republic of Thuringia has greater faith in the German National Theatre and grants a yearly subsidy of 1,500,000 marks. In the season of 1919-1920 the box office receipts amounted to 1,700,000 marks. But the purchasing value of a mark is not very high in Germany today and the cost of running a theatre has increased greatly. Hardt found himself at the end of the year with a deficit of 1,500,000 marks. So far he has been able in one way or another to cover this deficit. He feels he must persist until the country realizes that it cannot build up a new national life before it clarifies the fundamental national culture contained in its heritage at Weimar. The difficulties of his task have made him perhaps more pessimistic than the conditions of the country warrant; yet his views are not much darker than those of many another German who has a real desire for the return of the best German culture.

Hardt understands very clearly how the Prussian system was more and more impoverishing German spiritual life by building up its own complicated machine, how it forced the people to concentrate their efforts upon keeping this machine in a condition of highest efficiency, and how at last the people neglected the spiritual things and built up standards based on

material benefits alone. However, there was always some leisure as well as some protesting idealism which could turn its energies upon the finer spiritual culture of the nation and keep it from being wholly lost for want of attention. But he thinks that, as the extent of the defeat becomes more evident, the spiritual reserves of the country will become more impoverished. And because the nation must put forth every ounce of strength in work to pay its bills, its leisure will be lost and its physical powers will be taxed to such an extent that it will have no reserve to expend upon the fostering of the finer values of life, and its idealists will become mere pessimists. Yet Hardt and most of the finer grained men with whom I spoke know that the regeneration of Germany cannot be effected merely or even principally through work, for such a regeneration would mean that the purely materialistic standards of pre-war days would ultimately rise again; they know that above all else the spiritual standards must be renewed.

In the conditions that exist or threaten today Hardt sees a dangerous analogy to the days following the Thirty Years' War. In those days Germany became so impoverished and spiritually so exhausted that its cultural powers almost disappeared and even its language lost the power of expression. For a century the art of the country consisted merely of the slavish importation and awkward imitation of foreign art to the neglect of any vivid recollection of its own culture. Only when it freed itself from imitation and turned again to its own culture, rousing it from the stupor into which it had fallen through exhaustion, and strengthening it with that foreign art, Greek and English, which was in essence most related to it, did German art begin to live again.

It is that sort of extreme exhaustion which Hardt would like to spare the country in its present crisis. He realizes the importance of the movements that the workers have begun in order to know and foster the cultural values that the older cultured classes in their misery and confusion are neglecting. At the same time he firmly and, I believe, rightly insists that

no such movement can succeed unless the Weimar legend is kept as pure and strong as possible, for that legend contains the greater part of the country's most intimate and native spiritual treasures. Without the help of the Weimar legend the country would be like a man who, because of a recent unfortunate experience, undertook to wipe out the memory of his entire life and start anew. Innumerable surprises and distorted judgments would make his progress very difficult, and he would be without a clear direction until he learned to know himself on the basis of the health that was in him. To the German people the Weimar legend represents this basis; at least, attention to it releases within the mind of the people a search for fundamental native ideals, whatever their expression may be from time to time. With this in mind Hardt is going about his work at the German National Theatre at Weimar. He not only wants to give as good productions of the German classics as his resources will allow, but in the atmosphere of Weimar and its standards he wants to play especially the newest dramas as a test of their relation to the essentials of German life contained in the Weimar heritage.

### III

Hardt's task is difficult. He has to labor against the greatest German weakness, extreme sentimentality, which in the confusion of the country tends more than ever to vitiate all serious endeavors. When I was in Weimar in the autumn of 1920 the city was again filled with German travelers who had ostensibly come on the regular pilgrimage to their national Mecca. I met them everywhere, in the homes of Goethe, Schiller, Herder and Liszt, and in the little garden house of Goethe, and on the paths through the delightful park of Tiefurt. I listened to their remarks and watched them closely to see whether their disaster had brought them nearer to the spirit of the men whose former homes and haunts they had sought out. But they were the stupidly sentimental museum crowds of former years, whose loud affectations showed their

lack of real contact with the spirit that gives these places meaning. And yet Weimar was the one city I found in Germany that was still making a free display of the new republic's colors, black, red, and gold, as though to symbolize the service of its spirit to the new state. But the crowds seemed worried by them, while many openly mocked them. I visited the palace of the former princes of Weimar, one of the most inspiring in Germany, furnished in a taste that bears witness to the influence that the intellectual giants of Germany once had upon the princes of this little realm. As the guide led us from room to room he explained, to the visible horror of the crowd, that during the Constituent Assembly the people's delegates had been lodged there. But when he went on to say that all the furniture had been carefully stored away and cots put in instead, they were somewhat relieved. It is a strangely sentimental crowd that will stand in pious admiration in the bedchamber of a former prince, becoming indignant at what seems to them desecration of that chamber by their delegates, and yet will react immediately to an order for a general strike if some such prince should try to oust these delegates from their appointed work. It is just such sentimentalism that makes the work of Hardt so difficult.

But to be effective Hardt must seek for the broadest possible hearing. His work is not the kind that can afford to make its appeal principally to the great drama leagues throughout the country or to the more liberal of the new city and state theatres, however important it may be for them. He has the thankless task of trying to insist upon the clarification of a national legend within the whole people. He must clear it as well of the sentimentalizing of the exhausted masses of the middle class, who think they guard it in weeping for it, as of the distortions of it which disappointed reactionaries, who still consider themselves its sole legitimate interpreters, would still like to effect. He must again bring it to the attention of that large mass of people which, as the result of the passions of war, has lost all sense of things except as these help toward the crudest physical benefits. Even by the best elements of the



people's drama leagues his work will not be greatly appreciated, though its actual effect may be far-reaching. It will always seem to this class an attempt to educate them from above, and therefore far less important than the work which they feel they are initiating themselves. There are indications that they look with some suspicion upon the Weimar venture for that reason. They are not yet liberal enough to distinguish between that which is inherently theirs and that which they call theirs because they have a visible control of it.

Hardt has also to contend with many physical difficulties. The expense budget rose to alarming figures because of the decline of the mark and the enormous increase in the cost of living, and because of the ease with which the employees of the theatre, from star to scrub-woman, together with all other German workers, won their demands for high salaries. Formerly the ruling prince not only paid liberal subsidies to the theatre from his private purse, but also succeeded in satisfying the actors with ridiculous salaries by flattering them with his favor and his decorations. One of the less attractive results of Germany's turn to democracy is that the power of money has supplanted the power of royal favor. And yet when the German National Theatre was in serious financial straits after the revolution, the employees expressed their faith in its work by limiting their demands to the minimum on which they could subsist. In the matter of properties Hardt must resort to interesting subtleties of economy. Because of the prohibitive price of canvas his scene painter must content himself with paper. To lessen further the cost of equipment Hardt compresses the stage to the smallest possible dimensions that the action will bear, and seeks to attain his scenic effects through simple, suggestive arrangements, without being a devotee of the extreme expressionistic stage reform. While his simplicity does often attain remarkable effects and becomes strikingly expressive, it is purely a result of necessity; but for that very reason it is in closer contact with the spirit of the times. The property room of the National Theatre is a rich storehouse of properties accumulated since the days of

Goethe's management, but, because of the additional expense involved, many of them cannot be used today. While these enforced economies demand a keen inventiveness and much time, they are leading to a natural reform of the stage in close relation to the best of the new democratic spirit, and in pleasant contrast to the former tinsel.

In another kind of enforced thrift Hardt is less fortunate. To bring his work before the country with proper force he should have at his theatre some of the best talent in the country. But lack of money and insufficient faith in the importance of his undertaking make that impossible. He must therefore content himself with the company which he inherited from the old régime. I saw a performance of Goethe's *Faust* on which Hardt had expended much effort. The quiet simplicity of his arrangement of the scenes served to project the action clearly. The distribution of emphasis among the various parts showed the producer's deep understanding of the play. But Faust himself was played by an old favorite of the former court who declaimed his part with the bombastic sentimentalism that he had hurled across that stage for twenty-five years. He did not have the least conception of the character he was representing. Gretchen also was not of the best, but she showed evidences of being susceptible to training. The principal actors are evidently not good enough to do Hardt's work as it must be done, but he is not yet in a position to make the necessary changes.

## IV

Meanwhile Hardt is advancing his idea by sheer persistency and hard work. In the spring of 1921 he finally succeeded, after two years of urging, in inducing the city of Jena to give up the idea of supporting a theatre of its own and to entrust the Weimar theatre with supplying it with dramatic productions. The greatest benefit in that step lies in the new audiences he thus acquires, composed of the students of the University of Jena and the workers of one of the largest factories of Germany. The new Republic of Thuringia cele-

brated at Weimar from the 19th to the 25th of June, 1921, a festive week devoted to the drama. The whole of July was given over to "festival plays" for the German Schiller League. During that month high school students from all parts of Germany made expeditions to Weimar to visit the national shrines and to attend performances at the German National Theatre of Goethe's *Tasso*, Schiller's *Love and Intrigue* and Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm*. In spite of difficulties, Hardt is thus succeeding in helping to keep alive the Weimar legend.

Hardt is very intent upon his purpose. When I interviewed him to hear the details of his undertakings, he began immediately to outline a bold and interesting scheme long in his mind. He questioned me at length on the attitude of German-Americans to the new German republic. I could not help thinking how much almost all of them were doing to help relieve the physical sufferings of such relatives and friends as they knew to be in need, and how little they know or care about the fight for a new spirit which is slowly and laboriously being waged in Germany. I gave him what little encouragement I could. "If there are any who were honest in their fight against old Germany," he said, "then they ought now to help us keep the better spirit from being lost in the confusions of the day." Their minds and their knowledge of Germany, he thought, ought to be clear enough to see the need of emphasis on the Weimar legend in the struggle for regeneration, and they ought to come liberally to its support. He plans at an opportune time to address to them in behalf of the Republic of Thuringia, a request to establish an endowment for the German National Theatre at Weimar as an expression of their faith in the new democracy as opposed to the old system which they helped to defeat. Personally I should like very much to see Hardt succeed, for such support would make the German-Americans themselves more sane and would free them of the sentimentalities resulting from war's vexations. But he will have a hard time of it. Like other courageous and honest idealists in Germany today, he will have to grit his teeth and hold to his purpose until more favorable conditions prevail.

## v

A visit to Leipzig on leaving Weimar convinced me of the importance of Hardt's work more than anything he had said or shown. Leipzig is a rich commercial city and always has had good theatres, which it maintained from public moneys. Today it is supposed to be one of the most radical cities in the country, with the people strongly in control; yet its theatres are doing less for the people than those of any other large city I visited. The opera keeps up its standard as of old, but prices are so high that only the rich can go. The theatre for the drama is also too expensive for people of average income, and its repertory is confused and rather sensational. Since the revolution the city has acquired a third theatre, which produces new comic operas of questionable merit, and which has adjoining wine restaurants and dancing halls.

The moderate Socialists have organized a drama league in Leipzig which boasted of a membership of 25,000 and played in a heavily mortgaged house of its own. But the repertory was stupid and extreme. The management seemed to be in the hands of a typical "parlor bolshevist," who appeared to be devoted to all the latest "isms" and anxious to educate the people through "revolutionary art." I saw a play there by an obscure Russian; it was called *The Secret Corners of the Soul*, and the principal characters were "Reason" "Feeling" and "The Immortal Subconsciousness." The manager flattered himself that he thoroughly understood it all, but I doubt whether the actors knew what they were saying. The audience, simple working folk, seemed dumbfounded, bored and disgusted, but lacked the courage to admit that this was not food that they were willing or able to digest.

Another theatre of very much better quality was first united with the drama league, but differences arose and it is now trying to organize a dramatic society of its own in order to insure a steady patronage. In spite of its better program it is not likely to maintain itself without help from the city.

The city, however, is jealous of such ventures and instead of aiding quarrels with them.

Dissent and strife seem to have hold of this most radical people's city, even in its relation to art. Closer contact with the Weimar spirit and a refreshing in their minds of the Weimar legend might help it to a steadier course.

## VI

### THE MIND OF BAVARIA

#### I

THE GERMAN Revolution, which seems to have been a greater surprise to the Germans themselves than to the other nations who were anxiously awaiting its approach, at first wrought havoc with the mind of the Bavarian. He is a stolid, slow-moving fellow, gruff on the surface, though of kinder and gentler heart than the stern Northerner. He loves his comfort and hates to leave accustomed ways of life. When he is forced to do so, his confusion and anger are apt to lead him to excesses, until he tires and slips back to his old habits. So in the early days of the revolution, Munich was the scene of two most extreme and violent attempts at setting up a communistic state; yet today it shows fewer revolutionary changes than any other part of Germany. Its government is comfortably reactionary. A few extreme radicals of the idealistic type have seats in it, but they are kindly tolerated, flattered with insignificant concessions and neglected. It is the center of the armed force of German reaction, the *Orgesch*, the irregular military organization of Herr Escherich, which caused such difficulty to the national government in its attempts to carry out the disarmament terms of the treaty. Every evening I met large numbers on their way to drill at the various headquarters, openly carrying rifles over their shoulders. In Munich the police are as numerous as before the revolution and they still wear the old royal uniforms. Neither the old nor the new German flag is much in evidence, but when there is a display, the Bavarian colors appear, and occasionally even those of the House of Wittelsbach.

The revolution seems to have made the Bavarian more anti-Prussian than he was before the war. Now that he is again able to have some degree of peace, now that his beer reminds him somewhat of the good old days, and his father confessor is again willing to comfort him as to the ultimate fate of his soul, he puts the responsibility for the late upsets upon the foreigner, the Prussian. He doesn't even care to see the Prussian visit Munich, lest he stir up more trouble or eat too much of the Bavarian food and raise the price of it again. When I was there, it was at least as difficult for a Prussian to visit Munich as it was for me. Like all foreigners, he had to have police permission to enter the city, he had to report at headquarters within twenty-four hours of his arrival, the time of his stay was strictly limited and his actions were carefully controlled.

Bavaria wields a weighty club over North Germany. It is the farmland of the country. Conscious of the advantage this gives, it continually threatens to secede if the North should try to force upon it federal regulations which to its slow reactionary mind appear too violent a change. Secession would undoubtedly ruin both the North and South; but Bavaria is retrospective, and therefore ignorant of the results that such a move would cause. Meanwhile the new republic is established because events brought it to pass and swept the people into it; now that it is orderly they accept it, just as they would accept their king again, if he returned without too much commotion. In ordinary conversation, the people of Munich were speaking of the former ruler as their king with the same quiet affection as before the war, not because they particularly wanted him back but because the stolid farmer-citizen doesn't like to be uprooted and is consequently very slow about changing his vocabulary. These people are the least political of all Germany. The old reactionary leaders, therefore, had only to bide their time to assume slowly and unobtrusively their old command. For though the revolution forced out the king, it did not seriously disturb the real rulers of Munich and therefore of Bavaria: the *Hofbräu* and the church.

## II

Even the artistic life of Munich today, especially its theatres, is curiously under the domination of these powers. But this gruff and gentle capital is justly proud of its art and any pressure upon it by the authorities therefore must be applied carefully and subtly.

The People's Drama League of Munich is a flourishing organization, in most essential details similar to that of Berlin, but even freer from all disturbing threats of inner political strife. Though it was originally founded by members of the Majority Socialist Party, more than half of its 35,000 members today are of the middle classes. Most of the officers of the society are moderate Socialists, liberal minded, free from reactionary prejudices and determined that no political considerations shall influence the work of the League. The monthly publication of the League, intended principally to give its members a deeper understanding of the season's repertory, is ranked among the better literary publications of Germany. A striking exception to the general character of the membership is furnished by the editor, a young Bavarian author, Richard Scheid, who is an ardent Independent Socialist, former Minister of War in Eisner's government, and editor of the radical paper *Der Kampf*. But he carefully keeps party politics out of the magazine, which is, moreover, the weapon by which the League protects itself from the political interference periodically attempted by the authorities of the city. On the occasion of one such attempt the editor stated the policy of the League thus: "Whenever the stage, as at present, is in danger of becoming the arena for confused political passions, we will strike; but our blows are meant only for this abuse which thinking people of all parties will condemn, not for the parties or political convictions themselves.

"Let us rejoice that in the present wretched self-mutilations of our people, there exists at least one field of life which is still free from party passions. All of us will do our part, whatever position we otherwise may take, if we look upon the



stage as a serious element of life, love it, and seek to understand its premises and conditions. The pleasure we take in the theatre signifies in no wise a shallow, superficial desire for enjoyment. It is the expression of a very deep need, which strives for the discovery, discipline and development of personality in the presence of the poetic symbols of life.

"That which is offered as the best of art in no manner offends the moral, religious or political convictions that we may entertain outside the theatre. He who is so miserably sluggish that for the sake of sheer comfort he avoids the conflict of his convictions with those of others, who is afraid to put them to the test of contact with other views and interpretations, or to strengthen them through contradiction, has no claim to the serious stage and had better go to the comedians and acrobats. . . . Even when we condemn, let us not fall back to the stage of screeching barbarians, who dig up the hatchet because their God wears other festive garbs than the God of the neighboring tribe."<sup>1</sup>

Through pressure by the liberal members of the state legislature the handsome *Prinzregentheater* has been entirely given over to the League since the fall of 1920. Its repertory is made up almost wholly of the German classical and the nineteenth-century drama, with a sprinkling of Greek and a few Shakespearian plays. As in the drama leagues throughout Germany, the tendency is to simplify the staging as far as possible in order to produce a greater intimacy between the plays and the people. As art is made the concern of the people it will invariably become more simple, and as it grows more simple, its relation to the people will be increasingly intimate.

In addition to its own theatre, the League has the privilege of leasing large blocks of seats at very reasonable prices in the other two state theatres, the large Bavarian National Theatre with its repertory of opera and drama, and the small *Residenz-Theater* which is devoted principally to modern plays. The new director of these theatres, Dr. Karl Zeiss, freely consults

<sup>1</sup> *Münchner Volksbühne*, 1920, p. 34.

with the League as to his repertory. When good productions are staged at the various private theatres of the city, the League arranges opportunities for its members to attend these also. In general it seemed to me a very serious and unobtrusive organization, attempting to establish as natural a relationship as possible between the drama and the people to free and clear the people's mind through contact with the drama, and to keep the drama pure by bringing it before a simple, naturally receptive audience. Yet the authorities of the city and the state, largely controlled by the church, seem to sense in the League some curious danger threatening their influence. Whenever an opportunity presents itself they do their utmost to impede the League's work.

If the slightest criticism or caricature of Bavarian clericals occurs, the reactionary element of the audience is almost certain to interrupt the play with hisses and cat-calls, and on the following day the reactionary papers will use the incident to launch attacks upon the dangerous radicalism of the League. If in addition there should appear within a play a slur of some sort on the old monarchical group, a riot is almost certain. When Wedekind's *Schloss Wetterstein* was first played in Munich, its daring satire against the old society caused frequent interruptions from part of the audience. When in the play a persecuted member of society hurled against a sleek and prosperous villain of the ruling class the threat, "I will have your prince whipped out of his monarchy!" reserves had to be called to restore order.

During the *Kapp Putsch* in March, 1920, the reactionaries of Munich thought they saw a chance to rid themselves definitely of the League by treating it as a dangerous rebel organization. The military commander who was put in charge of the city during those few days of reactionary opera-bouffe, ordered the League disbanded and occupied its theatre with a company of soldiers liberally supplied with machine guns. At the last performance which the League was allowed to give, the approaches to all the exits and to the restaurant were guarded by machine guns trained upon the audience. The

latter is said to have been mildly amused and to have passed humorous resolutions of protest, while the soldiers smarted under the farce they were compelled to play. The *Putsch* disappeared in a very few days and the League quietly took up its work again. For a time it suffered some inconvenience because it was, as it still is, dependent on the regular companies of the state theatres many of whom were of the reactionary group and markedly neglected their work when playing before an audience wholly made up of members of the League. The new director of the state theatres has put a definite stop to this practice.

Even the *Hofbräu* does its part in making difficult that part of the work of the League which is concerned with developing a proper audience. In the official publications of the League the editors frequently feel the need of reminding a small group of the membership that theatrical performances are not beer concerts and that rowdiness and crude jollity are out of place.

### III

When direct interference with the work of the League proved of no avail, the reactionary elements in Munich set about to develop a counter league to save from contamination the people for whose welfare they hold themselves responsible. This new league is simply a branch of the *Bühnenvolksbund* of the Rhine Provinces, though they attempt to make it appear an organization developed by the people themselves. It is headed by dignitaries of the church and by prominent reactionary officials of the state and the city. Its political activity consists not so much in the dramatic program offered to the members as in the extensive propaganda through which it warns the people against the dangerous character of the Munich *Volksbühne* and draws them into its own league. It floods the city with posters and handbills describing the older league as a society of dangerous Socialists and disintegrating internationalists, organized and financed by scheming Jewish politicians. The cry against the Jewish danger is a very effective

weapon for the reactionaries in Munich. The people of the city have a very vivid recollection of the prominent part taken by certain Jewish politicians in the excesses of the two communistic revolutions. It is a simple task, therefore, to turn their resentment into a general anti-Semitic feeling, and even to bring a whole movement under suspicion if any trace of Jewish influence can be proved.

But even more effective is the propaganda of the reactionary league which commands the people to turn their attention to "Christian art" and guarantees a repertory in that spirit. To the ordinary member of the Catholic Church of Munich and South Bavaria a demand of this sort is an order which he has not the courage to disregard. For while defeat and revolution so confused the mind of the average German as to throw the political situation into hopeless disorder, the Catholic Party was able to maintain its discipline, and every parish priest is still a local boss. Demands by the new league are, therefore, orders from the church, and to disobey is to endanger one's soul. Even so, this Catholic league in the heart of Catholic Bavaria is not yet quite so strong in membership as the older liberal league; and the hysteria of its propaganda indicates that the disintegrating influences of the many new forces at work within the country are threatening even the old Catholic discipline.

It is very hard to determine just what the promoters of this league mean by "Christian art." They send their members into the city theatres to see the same plays that the older league has chosen for its repertory, but seem to disapprove of every modern play unless its author happens to be a Catholic of good standing. The objections to most of these plays can hardly lie in their religious qualities, but simply indicate the traditional fear of the reactionary to face squarely the forces that are demanding new adjustments. They have put their ban upon only one of the older plays. The classical play of religious tolerance, Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*, they have forbidden to their members, not so much because they feared its influence upon their people, it seemed to me, as because they

felt that they had to illustrate their idea of an unchristian drama by some concrete example. It was a typical case of reactionary blundering and afforded general amusement to the Munich press. If the average member of this league were not of a kind to obey the orders of his religious advisers without questioning, and thereby gain the peace of mind necessary to enjoy his *Hofbräu* thoroughly, this action might have caused much trouble.

A young and unassuming literary priest of Munich, Dr. Dimmler, was helping the Catholic cause far more simply and more effectively in the summer of 1920 than the Christian Drama League and its laborious propaganda. That summer the Passion Play of Oberammergau should have been given. But scarcity of food made it impossible for the little village to undertake to feed the visitors who would have come to the performances. In this circumstance a private theatre in Munich saw a chance to improve its fortunes and staged a very good performance of an old French version of the Passion story. The price of admission was high and the effort too literary to win the endorsement of the church. After a short time the play failed because of lack of patronage. Dr. Dimmler, however, realized what importance a Passion Play might assume in the political and religious entry of the church into the dramatic field, if only the play were composed and staged in a style approaching that of Oberammergau.

He was the author of a series of short plays for amateur performances in "Christian homes." With this experience, he set out to dramatize very simply the story of the Passion. Though the result has not much artistic value, it shows a keen perception of the audience for which it is intended. It is built against the background of that large store of pious memories which every Bavarian Catholic accumulates by attendance at mass from early childhood. In simple manner the author unfolds the story of the sufferings of Christ. Christ, as the central figure, does not speak a word or make a move not thoroughly familiar to the people from the Lenten services and the most popular sacred legends of the Catholic Church.

The play was staged in the open, in a clearing of the beautiful woods of Herzogpark just out of Munich. The stage was of simple construction, in pageant style. The arch in the center was so arranged that by a few ingenious shifts it could be made to represent the hall for the Last Supper, the Mount of Olives, Pilate's judgment seat, or Calvary. The large wooden structures on either side gave the necessary illusion of expanse, and furnished necessary exits. The domes formed by the magnificent trees round about had remarkable acoustic qualities and furnished the impressive atmosphere necessary for a proper effect.

In spots the composition of the play was very poor. In building up the character of Judas, the author evidently felt that this figure represented no sacred memories upon which he need play, and he gave free rein to his dramatic talent. His idea was to depict in Judas a subtle conflict between love for the law and love for Christ, and yet to make him a person reminiscent of the Judas of the popular old German woodcuts. He had such poor success that the actor had to resort to weird pantomime to express anything at all. Pilate was a weak, hen-pecked villain and Claudia a sentimental German *Hausfrau*. As a whole it was an awkward dramatic construction, but attuned closely and in a very interesting way to the religious memories of the audience and therefore one capable of unusual effects. The crowds used in the play were very well drilled and excellently costumed. Where the action lagged or unsympathetic secular scenes threatened the general atmosphere of the performance, the orchestra, hidden somewhere behind the stage, played familiar chorals and chants, thus contributing its part toward releasing within the audience the pious reminiscences upon which the play depended.

As soon as the church authorities realized what help this play might give their cause, they backed it with the full power of the organization. On the doors of every Catholic Church in Munich and for a radius of many miles around the city, posters advertised the Passion Play and urged its benefits upon the congregation. A gayly costumed peasant throng would crowd

the paths to Herzogpark every Saturday and Sunday afternoon, telling their beads as if on a pious pilgrimage. Incidentally the young priest-playwright, when I saw him last, was on the point of turning into a successful business man, and was planning to incorporate his venture. He was quite conscious of the importance of his play in the political struggle engaging Bavaria, though he professed that it was a purely artistic undertaking.

## IV

During the two attempts at a communistic republic in Munich the old royal theatres were entirely given over to the people. No admission was charged and the ruling commission controlled the repertory. The result is said to have been a laughable farce. The actors demanded exorbitant fees for their services and amused themselves by confusing the audience with extreme caricatures of the parts assigned to them. With the resultant reaction the old authorities, the old discipline, and also the old favoritism in respect to repertory were reinstated, but the actors succeeded in maintaining their claims to very greatly increased salaries. As a result there was a deficit of several million marks at the end of the first year, and the state had to be approached for subsidies. The friends both of the *Volksbühne* and of the Catholic League were powerful enough in the legislature to stipulate as a condition of the granting of such subsidies that the theatres be in large part given over to the needs of their societies, and that a new director be appointed in sympathy with the work of the two leagues and with ability to improve the quality of the dramatic performances. Inasmuch as the aims of the two leagues are extremely divergent, however similar their methods in the theatre itself must be, this represented a very difficult task.

The state was very fortunate in procuring in Dr. Karl Zeiss a man who has proved his ability through very good work in the management of the theatres of Dresden and Frankfurt on the Main. I spoke to him about a week after he had entered upon his duties on September 1st, 1920. He was highly enthu-

siastic, and very confident that he would be all the freer to develop the theatres of Munich according to his best ideals because the varied interests behind him assured him of the support of every faction. That undoubtedly would have been true if he could have maintained the strict neutrality which he believed the situation demanded and could have devoted himself whole-heartedly to his artistic tasks. However, the words from Goethe's *Egmont*, "Safety and peace! Order and freedom!" which he chose as the motto for his program upon taking office, lead one to suspect that from the very start he was too conscious of the political pressure upon his artistic plans.

His first season has been one of artistic rather than political neutrality. His best work is said to have consisted in helping to put upon a high plane the performances for the *Volksbühne* in the *Prinzregententheater*. In the other theatres, where he had to serve the general public and both the leagues, he showed less courage or clarity of purpose. Reactionary prejudice succeeded in hounding several of his best actors into resigning, thus drawing him into the political fight in order to protect himself, and robbing his real work of much energy and time. It almost seems that the political neutrality which is essential can be maintained only through colorlessness in matters of art, and that dramatic art in Munich can be free only if liberalism prevails in politics and gives art a chance to live its own life.

## v

An enthusiastic group of young Munich radicals, a remnant of the aesthetic dreamers who formed part of Eisner's following in the revolution of 1918, have set up a small theatre of their own to foster "revolutionary art," and to develop a theatre commune in a truer sense than the one developed by the *Volksbühne*. They too profess an absolute freedom from political purpose; but you need only talk with the leaders or mix with the audience in the court before its small back-yard theatre to know that their minds are so occupied with protests against the established organizations of society, and with the



construction of radical Utopias, that their lives cannot easily be divorced from politics.

The company is composed of talented young professional actors, whose enthusiasm for the social service which they believe they are rendering gives a delightful quality to their work. They have that extreme paternalism of youth which collects a little audience of faithful followers to open up before them exact visions of the ultimate values of life. The hall in which they play is an old barn, transformed into a small theatre at little expense but with much good and simple taste. The seats are crude benches, and the stage is so small that the actors moving about on it seem unduly tall. And yet I met nowhere else an audience that felt so much at home as the people in this hall. One of Anzengruber's realistic dramas was being played extremely well, considering the scarcity of equipment. The audience was listening not with the reverent seriousness you find at a good performance at the *Volksbühne*, but in a spirit of natural and happy participation. I felt clearly the intimacy between the actors and the individuals in the audience, as you might find it in a small, cultured amateur society; but there was nothing amateurish about the performance. Nor did I sense during the play itself any of the strong political current that I found so dominant in the courtyard outside and in the theatre offices. It was evident that everybody was having too good a time to think of their political grievances.

This theatre belongs to the audience in a very real sense. The necessary capital was collected by selling bonds at twenty marks (forty cents at that time). No single member is allowed to own more than fifteen such bonds and no one is entitled to more than one vote in the assembly. Members pay about a third of the admission price asked of strangers, which is only ten marks (twenty cents) for the best seat. Evidently little money is required for the venture. All the work except that of the actors, who receive a very modest salary, is voluntary. Each member devotes a large share of his leisure time to the theatre. They organize in shifts to do the

necessary office work, carpentering, decorating, cleaning or whatever else is needed.

The repertory consists almost exclusively of modern plays taken from the life of the people of the humbler classes. But if the performance I saw is a good criterion, these revolutionaries are merely kind, jolly Bavarians who are finding a very high-grade substitute for the crude entertainments of the beer halls. Though they grumble overmuch against political oppression, when you engage them in conversation, or dream fantastic dreams of communistic heavens, they certainly are not the anarchists reactionary papers picture them, nor such perverters of art as the *Volksbühne* would have you believe. Their performances are so good that political aims are for the time forgotten. In an interesting manner contact with art, even in such a case as this, tends to clear political confusion.

## VI

Munich possesses in the *Kammerspiele* a theatre which before the war enjoyed the reputation of being one of the very best private theatres in Germany. It was a refined pioneer in the interpretation of the modern drama, and by ingenious recasting opened up the riches of many old plays for its modern audience. Among its actors it had some of the best talent of the country. Its director, Otto Falckenberg, ranks as a highly talented artist and an eminent student of the drama. The audience was that rather large group of refined, gentle, intellectual aristocrats of Munich, who represented a striking contrast to the cruder jolly followers of the *Hofbräu*.

Today this theatre is one of the sad ruins of the war. It has the same director and most of the high-grade actors, but its spirit has been killed by the coming of a new audience. The same economic situation which compels the theatre to ask very high prices of admission in order to exist, has impoverished the old audience and made it dependent upon the drama leagues. The new audience is merely a group of the war-rich, without a trace of the refinement which made possible

the former quality of work and without any particular desire to develop it. It has the old *Hofbräu* taste and wants *Hofbräu* food, but wants it served at the aristocratic table and with the refined service of the *Kammerspiele*. It is a sorrowful sight to see Falckenberg and his company attempting to maintain their self-respect by giving this former quality to their work, but being dragged down inevitably toward the level of the audience. The result is a sharp disturbing discord. It demonstrates that a high-grade private theatre cannot exist in Germany under present conditions, and emphasizes the importance of the drama leagues and of the city or state theatres, in close relation with the drama leagues, in preserving the quality of the drama.

## VII

The real amusement centers for the unthinking masses of Munich, the "Great Society," are the innumerable beer halls, descendants of the *Hofbräu*. Even the moving pictures cannot compete with them. Every night large numbers of such halls are open, with cabaret programs in which the Tyrolese or Bavarian comedians predominate. These halls are tightly packed and the smoke is thick almost to suffocation, but the beer is cheap and better than for many years of war regulations. It therefore takes but little ingenuity to win applause and laughter, or anger if you want it.

The comedians in these places are the real politicians of the people. They seem to have the power of sensing accurately the temper of the large crowds and of playing to it. Their couplets reflect in the broadest way the reaction to the affairs of public life. The refrain is everywhere the same: "It all is a muddle; we cannot understand any of it; just let us alone; give us back the good old comfort and the good old beer, and the authorities can grind along on their jobs if they enjoy them."

I saw no public holiday in Germany so thoroughly and so universally enjoyed, as the annual *Oktoberfest* in 1920, which the Munich authorities ordered to take place a fortnight early,

about the middle of September, and at which pre-war beer was restored to the public for the first time. It seemed as though all Munich were reeling for joy, though joy was not sufficient cause for some of the staggering I saw. The conservative papers on the following day commented extensively on the spirit of the celebration as on a great victory. They evidently felt that their trials were over, now that their beloved confederate, the *Hofbräu*, had again recovered his former robust health.

## VII

### AUSTRIA'S DREAM

#### I

**A**S YOU probe into the conditions of the small republic of German Austria, you are tempted to draw the conclusion that, while there are plenty of men who talk and act like the Austrians of old, Austria as a country no longer exists at all. Politically and economically the confusion is so great that all attempts to clear it appear like helpless child's play. There are political parties and subdivisions of parties galore. The monarchists divide themselves into three contending groups, each with a determined mind of its own as to who is to occupy the throne. The more or less democratic capitalistic class and the liberals are so poorly organized that they exhaust themselves in useless theorizing. The squabbles among the various types of Socialists and Communists are downright ludicrous. The Catholic Church alone seems to exert some degree of control over its members throughout all the parties.

The people seem to grow more and more dumbfounded as they realize more clearly how small a nation they are now. A feeling of helplessness weighs them down as though they had lost all power of self-control. In the fall of 1920<sup>1</sup> a dollar bought nearly three hundred Austrian crowns as against five crowns before the war. Prices for food and clothing had risen almost in the same proportion. A dinner at a restaurant cost two hundred crowns, and yet the restaurants were filled with people eating well. A good many Austrians seemed even to have grown rich on their country's misery.

<sup>1</sup> The Austrian crown has fallen very considerably since and has made conditions even more artificial.

Meanwhile the great majority starved at home, or lived in a daze, and not a pleasant daze but rather that of a child severely punished for some wrong it cannot itself measure. The Austrian is like a child. He has little of the Eastern fatalism, but he is proud, and in his greatest misery he is naïvely optimistic. If you question him regarding the political affairs of the country, he will answer with half a smile: "I don't know what to make of it. They are mad, all of them!"

The Austrians simply cannot comprehend their economic condition. They do not understand the exchange; they see in it only the result of a fatal war, and war must pass some time or other. They are a helpless lot, and yet they feel that they must do something to maintain their self-respect and to win back the respect of others.

You hear them say: "But everybody loves Vienna. People from everywhere will always come to be happy and to smile in Vienna, to hear the Viennese opera and enjoy the Viennese operetta." Vienna, however, has suffered more than any other part of Austria. It is a city of traditions, and traditions to be enjoyed today in reminiscence, not in fact. Vienna is cut off from the country that fed it and supplied it with comforts for visitors. More and more, too, it is being depleted of its artists as they get a chance to work at better money, to live on better fare, and to play to less starved audiences in other places.

But once the opera, the concerts, and the high-grade theatre are gone, Austria will have nothing but what Germany can give it. Austria does not object at all to a union with Germany, but it does object violently to coming to Germany like a beggar. Then all its self-respect would go, its optimism too; and even reminiscence would be bitter.

Therefore the Austrians are determined to save their art at least. Meanwhile it may be necessary to live on very small rations, but no outsider need be aware of that. They will tighten their belts and hide their poverty behind the walls of Vienna, while they find some small, pleasant town in the hills and make of it a place to exhibit their music, their opera, and their drama.

## II

In August, 1920, I found the President of Austria and most of his Cabinet, the leading business men of the country, and a dozen of the greatest intellectual leaders gathered together in Salzburg. Salzburg is a city in the foothills of the Austrian Alps, rich in monuments and the history of Austrian art, unscathed by war and far from the actualities of suffering Vienna. These men were planning to resuscitate the country by establishing here a grand festival playhouse. To them this playhouse is to be a sanctuary, offering an escape out of the miseries of their present life into art, where they can seek new human power in the pictures of the drama, and new faith and new promises in the secrets of music. They think of it as a temple, and not as a theatre. They are disappointed with your lack of comprehension if you look on their project as the establishment of a large theatre, where the best plays might be given in the most approved style before large audiences, who come from all over the world to see what new effects can be produced by an artistic people under stress. They will launch upon a long discourse as to the need of spiritual regeneration after the degenerating influences of the war. They will speak of the decline of the theatre, due to the fact that the box office has gained ascendancy over art and exhibits only cheap, exotic sensationalism. Therefore they propose to turn from the theatre to the festival playhouse, an inspiring monument to art, located not in the center of a bustling city but in a stately grove on the edge of the Austrian Alps. This they will have served by producers and actors intent upon ministering to the spiritual needs of an audience capable of reverent devotion.

Clearly this is not a theatre as we know it. It is so strange, in fact, that we involuntarily suspect it and look for other motives. In such a mood indeed it is possible to find a trace of commercial motives and not a little of national purpose in the scheme; and yet these people are sincere in their avowals. As a matter of fact, the greatest of their national drama was conceived in a festive ethical spirit not very different from the

purpose they now profess. Today, when their material misery is greatest, they are simply reviving that spirit and framing it in the most appropriate fashion they can conceive.

Salzburg is very near Germany. That seems to them a distinct advantage, and is indicative of their consciousness of German relationship, which continually pulls at the boundaries set up by the treaty. While Salzburg is now simply a modest peasant city located within the rich valleys of a broad mountain stream fed by the Austrian Alps, it was for more than a thousand years, up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the residency of powerful archbishops, who adorned the city and its surroundings with cathedrals, chapels and monasteries, with a university, with fortresses and castles, and pleasure palaces and gardens of exquisite taste. It is one of those rare cities of Europe that the ages have lavishly favored and modern life has hardly touched at all. The surrounding hills have had centuries to accustom themselves to the works of man, to the rugged old castles and the newer Renaissance buildings, and have accepted them as equals in the landscape.

They propose to build the festival playhouse not in the city itself, but just outside in the suburb of Hellbrunn, where Archbishop Wolf Dietrich once spent the country's wealth in building a sumptuous palace and rococo garden for the entertainment of his many guests. In the medieval woods nearby there is already a natural theatre worn into the lava rock, where it is said Wolf Dietrich occasionally amused his guests with an Italian farce. They have chosen their site in a broad clearing of these woods, with a view upon a glacier, so that before you reach it you must pass the city, the palace and gardens of old Wolf Dietrich and the deep woods beyond, and thus are far removed from interference by the worries of daily life.

Professor Poelzig, the most famous theatre architect in Germany and head of the Berlin Art School, who presented a marvelous set of plans for the playhouse, rather astonished the judges by using but few of the innovations which he so boldly incorporated in Reinhardt's new theatre in Berlin. They were convinced at once that his plan embodied the spirit



of the enterprise. He had absorbed the past of Salzburg, had found its predominating characteristics the still lingering atmosphere of the jolly courts of the archbishops and the old Italian baroque monumental buildings, curled, capricious, non-academic. It was not the stiff and decadent rococo of Potsdam, but rather that reflected in the music of Mozart, Salzburg's favorite son. He pictured a theatre nestling into this historic background in intimate relation to the surrounding hills, of refined baroque style with picture stages and rising tiers of galleries, intimate, a bit aristocratic, impressive not so much for luxuriousness as for the quiet spaciousness which invites everyone to come and worship. The plans of Poelzig offer to the people a house in which they can reverently enjoy the riches of the past. The meadow in front of the playhouse will become a garden in which open-air performances can be held and around which will wind rococo pergolas leading to a miniature theatre for more intimate or experimental plays and to a recreation hall on the opposite side.

Only such plays and works of music are to be given as truly serve a festal purpose. By that they mean performances which will release within the people their truest hopes, will make the Austrian realize his genuine foundations, will free him from extraneous and misleading ambitions, and will take him out of the confusions of the present by making him conscious of himself. It is not at all a theatre to them, but a national spiritual forum, expressing the belief and the longing which strongly influenced Austrian and German art at its best moment and which has determined the standard by which they call things classic. There must be no concessions, they say, to the desire for the spectacular or sensational; above all, no catering to delicate aesthetic fads or to literary oddities in festive garbs.

Austrian art is to be preferred to German art, and German art to foreign. For the present they propose to play only Shakespeare and Calderón among non-German dramatists. Of German art they will produce only those plays in which the influence of the South has softened the harsh materialistic

Northern note. For the first season the following program is proposed: Of the drama they will produce *Life as a Dream*, a symbolic comedy by the Austrian classical poet Grillparzer, and Schiller's *Bride of Messina*, the consecration of tragedy as they perceive it. Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Wagner's *Lohengrin* have been suggested as the most appropriate operas, supplemented by concert performances of Schubert's *Mass in E sharp Major*, Bruckner's *Mass in F Minor* and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*.

## III

Most impressive is the devotion of the artists to the vision this proposal arouses in them. The foremost have deliberately rearranged their lives to devote themselves wholly to its realization. Hugo von Hofmannsthal has bought a home in Salzburg, has settled there, and has just completed an adaptation of Calderón for presentation at the playhouse. The composer, Richard Strauss, is developing a new style in his latest compositions under the influence of this new ideal, and has pledged to the festival playhouse the net proceeds of his recent foreign tours. A half dozen other prominent Austrian artists have left Vienna to devote themselves more fully to the Salzburg idea. Max Reinhardt, the most ingenious of German producers, finding the masses of the Prussian capital hopelessly dulled to artistic effects, has turned over to others his chain of Berlin theatres through which he captured the imagination of students of the stage the world over. He has lost interest even in his large circus theatre before its possibilities have been fully exploited; wisely, perhaps, feeling that he has reared in it a wild and unruly thing which never can be tamed to serve the finer human ends. In Salzburg, he has bought one of the beautiful old palaces and has settled there, pledging his powers wholly to the festival playhouse.

In August, 1920, on the occasion of the annual general meeting of the organizations that are working to bring the playhouse into immediate being, Reinhardt gave a performance of Hofmannsthal's adaptation of the old English morality play

*Everyman.* The performance, which was worthy of Reinhardt's genius, was given in the open square before the beautiful Renaissance cathedral. The enthusiasm of the many delegates, the atmosphere of the city, even the surrounding hills, he forced to serve as background to his play. He gathered from Berlin and Vienna the best actors and inspired them with his purpose, so that they worked long and diligently in preparation for the event with no other remuneration than the consciousness of performing a great artistic service. He created a performance which everybody present felt to be a true expression of the festal purpose they are seeking to define as the basis of their undertaking.

The devotion of the authors, producers, actors and artists is one of the most convincing evidences of the power of this novel idea. If those partaking in the various festival performances did not enter whole-heartedly into the spirit in which the idea was conceived, if they took their parts in a professional spirit, simply as an opportunity to exhibit their talents or increase their revenues, the playhouse would soon be turned into an ordinary theatre or concert hall, and not only its reason for existence but, in all likelihood, its chances for success, would be destroyed. It is, therefore, assumed that great artists of the drama, the opera and the concert stage will look upon Salzburg as a place to which they can escape after the season in the ever less idealistic theatres, to devote the summer months to renewal of their faith in the highest elements of their calling. It is proposed to build small studios in the suburb near the playhouse and to form a colony for the artists in which they may devote themselves wholly to the spirit of their mission and to a deeper study of the works of art which they are to reproduce. They are to have this living free, but it is not expected that any other remuneration will be asked.

The location of Salzburg guarantees that the audience, too, will be in a frame of mind quite different from that of the ordinary playgoer. It is equally far from Vienna and from Munich. It will be impossible to hurry on from "the city," take in a performance and hurry back again. The promoters

of the idea will not have their efforts spoiled by the tired business man, pressed for time. The whole plan is arranged on the principle that hurry and devotion are deadly enemies. They refuse even to make arrangements for a tram-car or any other conveyance to reach the clearing where the playhouse is to be located. On the other hand, they plan an elaborate system of well-built walks through the thick forests and hills that surround the theatre. If the undertaking should prove to be the success of which they dream, they hope to build large and comfortable hotels out in the suburbs so as to induce their visitors to spend as much time as possible walking through the gardens and woods with a view of the glaciers. Thus the evening and the festival play will find them in a mood sensitive to the chords which the artist would strike upon their souls.

## IV

It is a regeneration through art of which these men are dreaming. Though it may at first seem fantastic, many of Austria's best men have enough faith in it to devote their lives to its realization. Throughout Austria there are branches of the organization to propagate the idea. Other branches have been formed in Holland and Scandinavia, and in the larger cities of Germany. To the idealists of Central Europe it represents a positive and effective reaction to the Prussian spirit. They hope that from it will come throughout Europe a strengthening of the kind of faith that filled the century of idealism following 1750.

## A FINAL WORD

**I**N THE preceding pages I have kept as closely as possible to a simple narrative of what I saw in Germany. I have intentionally refrained from formulating a theory of the relation of the German drama to German life since no theoretical formulation can describe that relation as vividly as the events themselves. The rapid increase in size of the new audience in the various drama leagues, the growth of understanding and of intimate appreciation of the drama, the sincere and genuine intensity with which the new audience searches the drama for answers to the questions of its own life, are proof enough of the power which the German drama wields over its audience and of the purpose with which the audience approaches the drama. All the playwrights, critics, directors, and even most actors who are working in contact with this new audience, are clearly conscious of its nature and of its longing for a clearer insight into life.

The purpose of an audience determines its interpretation of the drama and, when that purpose is as strong and prevalent as in the drama leagues, it determines also the nature of the drama itself as far as it lives within the audience. This audience, moreover, and with it the best critics and playwrights of the country, accepts readily the statement that the drama has a purpose, provided only that the purpose be a genuine clarifying of that which is most real and most worth while in life. At the same time they very quickly and surely distinguish from such a purpose the purely superficial, dogmatic moralizing as found in many a problem play and thesis play. But they turn with equal resentment or else with a plain lack of understanding from the theory that the drama has no purpose, or that the drama because of its purpose to clarify life is moral and therefore cannot be artistic. Art for art's sake

when applied to the drama destroys the drama for them. Nietzsche expressed this attitude very well in his "Twilight of the Idols":<sup>1</sup>

"The fight against purpose in art has always been the fight against the moralizing tendency in art, against subordinating art to morality. *L'art pour l'art* says: The devil take morality! If the purpose of moralizing and uplift is excluded from art, it still does not follow that art has no purpose at all, that it has no goal, no meaning, that it is *l'art pour l'art* — a worm biting its own tail. Better no purpose at all than a moral purpose! — thus pure passion speaks. A psychologist however will ask: What does art do? Does it not praise, glorify, select, emphasize? In all this it strengthens or weakens certain valuations. — Is this only a by-product, an accident, something in which the instinct of the artist does not share at all? Is it not rather the very presupposition for the ability of the artist? Is not his deepest instinct directed upon art or rather upon the meaning of art, upon life, upon the desirability of life? Art is the great stimulus to life. How can it be interpreted as without purpose or goal, as *l'art pour l'art*?"

Of recent German poets Richard Dehmel has studied most thoroughly the relation of art to life. He attacks most bitterly those who hold to the theory of art for art's sake, who "consciously go into ecstasies over the unconscious." In his autobiography he says of such theorists:<sup>2</sup>

"To be sure, they are quite right, these gentlemen of the unconscious. One can live without sense, and die even more easily. Knowledge is 'in the last analysis' nothing but insanity; art is 'at bottom' nothing but higher madness; at bottom everything everywhere is merely madness; at bottom even madness is reasonable; at bottom everything amounts to the same thing; at bottom there is nothing but animated dirt; at bottom every roach is a prodigy, and in naïvety every ox is superior to the greatest genius."

The purpose of getting a deeper insight into life, of estab-

<sup>1</sup> *Werke*, VIII, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> *Gesammelte Werke*, VIII, p. 10.

lishing man's relation to life upon sounder instincts and higher ideals has been the strongest force in the development of the modern German drama. As I have said before, the real Renaissance, its divine, pure joy in life and in the world, its playful faith in man as the center of life hardly touched the heavier German. Only out of such an attitude to life can a real meaning be given to art for art's sake, especially in relation to the drama. Only such divine unconcern can create man in the fulness of life and put him into conflict with other men for better or for worse. To the exclusion of such a Renaissance spirit Germany was absorbed in the Reformation and in Humanism, in religion, philosophy and learning. Through these forces came the rebirth of the individual in Germany. What strength there is to the German expression of that time is born of an overpowering religious fervor. When this fervor lost its intensity it grew conventional and dogmatic and contentious, and spent its dying strength in the chaotic Thirty Years' War. For a long time the German spirit lay dormant, and German expression was limited to imitation of the more robust spirits of its neighbors, to mere rationalism or to a few flashes from the smoldering religious spirit. When Lessing again aroused the German spirit from its stupor he was most conscious of his purpose to reinvigorate German life. Though the German audience was not yet able to appreciate his purpose, Lessing attempted to inspire it by establishing a national theatre at Hamburg.

The great characters in Goethe's dramas, Götz, Faust and Iphigenie, very clearly arise from a desire to form for his countrymen an ever clearer vision of the fundamental forces of German life. Without in the least detracting from his fame as a poet he can very aptly be called the educator of his nation in spiritual values. Under Schiller's influence Goethe took a very vital interest in his work as director of the theatre at Weimar and the influence this theatre might have upon the German audience as a whole. The entire power of Schiller lies in the consummate force with which he portrayed to his people their own highest instincts and ideals. He is the

teacher of morality and idealism, the uplifter of Germany, if you like. But his moral fervor is so genuine, his contact with the people so close and true and his relation to the fundamental spirit of the German Reformation so intimate, that to his people he is the greatest of all poets, not excluding Goethe, even though he has but a small fraction of Goethe's real creative power.

The Romanticism of the early nineteenth century dogmatically and painstakingly avoided all purpose in art, but it did not produce a single drama that captured the imagination of the people. Kleist and Hebbel on the other hand, became great figures in the history of the drama, and with great intensity again devoted themselves to its fundamental purpose. With a feeling more passionate and fervent than that of any other German poet Kleist attacked the problem of man and his adjustment to society. Hebbel's vivid dramas are swiftly moving and deeply probing dialectics by which he tries to solve the problem of man's value to the fundamental cultural institutions.

In the eighties of the last century, naturalism again denied all purpose in art, and in its longing to know the mere mechanism of nature, it pretended to deny all purpose in nature also. By its emphasis it discovered much in nature that hitherto had been neglected. One of these discoveries, however, was the dignity of the humblest man, no matter what his fate and condition. Out of this resulted a new purpose and a new ethics, or rather the old purpose and old ethics founded upon a new and broader faith in man. In direct consequence of this new faith and of its expression in the new drama the people as a whole were educated as never before to an appreciation of the drama. When naturalism had performed this function and had established the dignity of man without reference to his social station, the emphasis again shifted to the inner, more spiritual forces, and the purpose of the drama to clarify the fundamental forces of man received an almost religious sanction. This is clearly the purpose of the present-day expressionists, who of all German playwrights best represent the



spirit that is trying to develop in the drama leagues. When they speak to you of their work, whether it be Hauptmann or Toller or Kornfeld or the extreme Mombert, they disclose their purpose very clearly.

The revolution, they say, if it is really to accomplish anything, must build upon a foundation more truthful than the old structure, more vitally inherent in the nation. The gaps created by the revolution cannot be filled in merely by new institutions. Man himself, the individual man, must first be revolutionized and revitalized. Here lies the work of the artist. It is his function, if he is a true artist, to create men, men who live a life, real, genuine, strong and joyful. To do this the artist must enter into a spiritual struggle with the life about him until he can so grasp that which is most powerful and genuine in life, that he can give it form in the characters which he creates. As the artist succeeds in seeing that which is truly vital he rises to the faith and joy in life which make his pictures clear and convincing. The truth and clarity of his picture of life will bring the individual in the audience into so close a relationship with art that with the characters of the drama he will pass through a process of rebirth. The force expressed in the drama will remind the hearer of the force in himself, and its simple dignity will give him the desire to elevate himself through honest struggle and simplicity.

This simple optimism of the artists has not yet found expression in any one drama powerful enough to be the pathfinder for the people, but the spirit of these artists, and of the critics and producers who are helping them, has seized upon large audiences. It is this which makes the work of the drama leagues together with that of Weimar and Salzburg so significant, which makes the relation of the audience to the older German drama so intimate and real, and makes the faith in themselves and in their nation so genuinely a constructive force.

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